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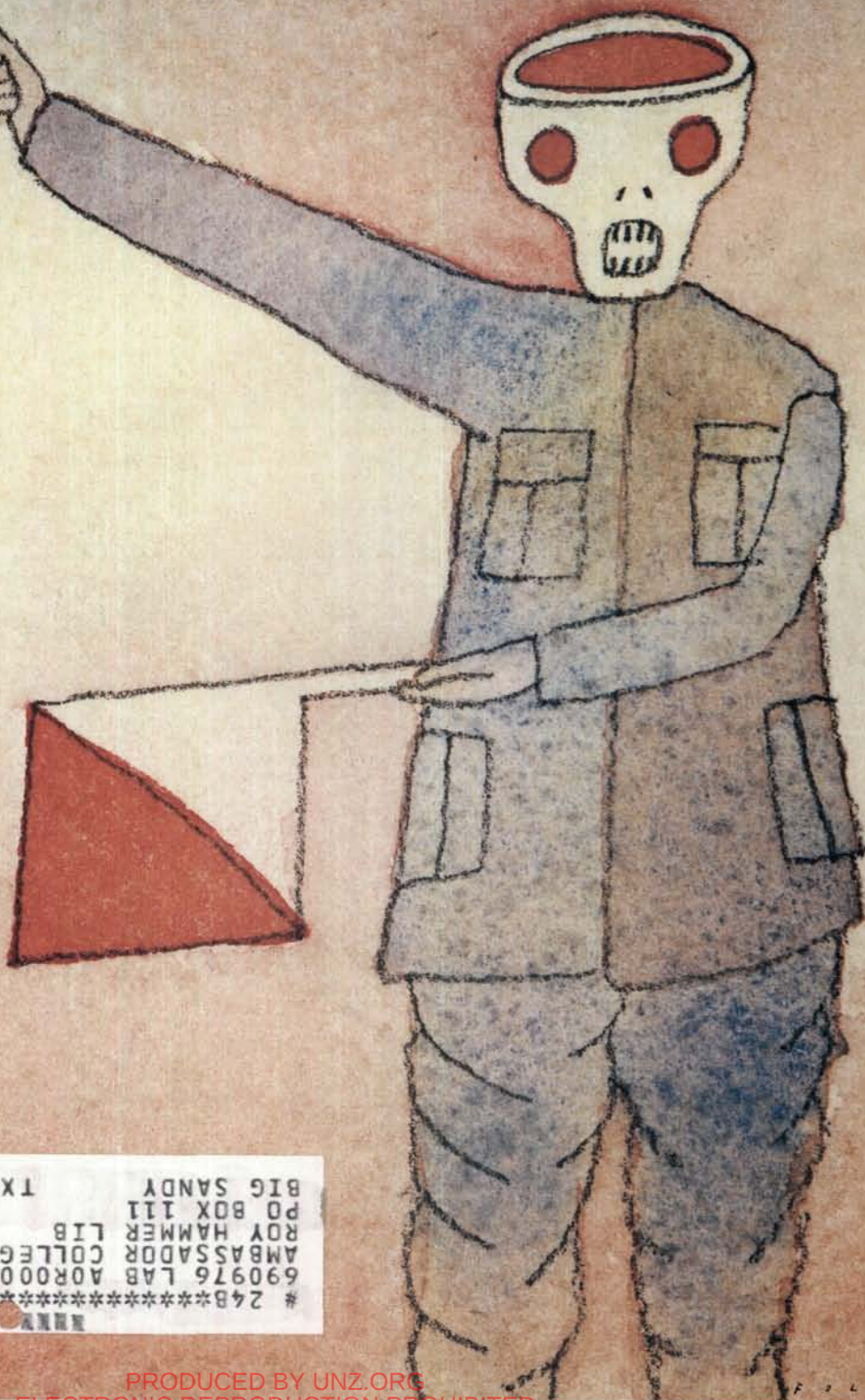
The Atlantic

KIDS AS CAPITAL / AMERICA'S JAPAN-HANDLERS

THE REAL WAR 1939-1945

AN
EXPERIENCE
IN
HORROR
AND
MADNESS

BY
PAUL
FISCELL



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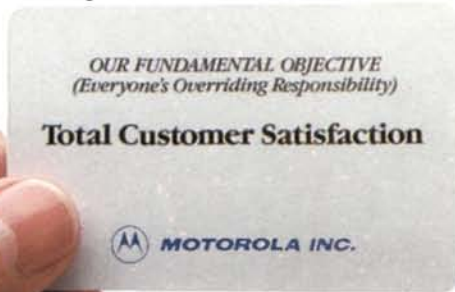
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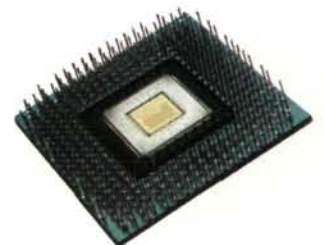
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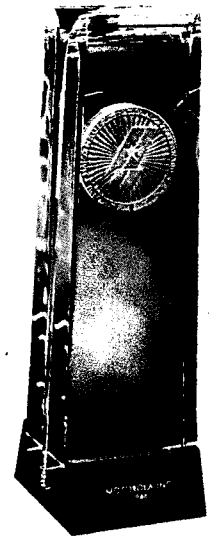
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Page 62



Page 56



Page 12

REPORTS & COMMENT

- 14 TOKYO:**
THE JAPAN-HANDLERS
The people in government, commerce, and academe whose business it is to know about Japan have sharply divergent interests and agendas, and these cleavages make a difference.
by JAMES FALLOWS
- 26 ENVIRONMENT:**
SAVING THE CRACIDS
Many birds of the cracid family—a dietary staple in parts of Latin America—have been driven almost to extinction. Their fate now lies largely in the hands of private breeders.
by NATALIE ANGIER

HUMOR, FICTION, AND POETRY

- 40 STONE FIG**
by ANNE STEVENSON
- 49 SOMEPLACE LIKE
NEW JERSEY**
*by DEBORAH CHANLEY
WEISS*
- 55 INSTANT**
by GUY BILLOUT
- 60 BARBED WIRE**
by RALPH BURNS
- 68 MATERIAL**
by DONALD HALL

32 THE REAL WAR 1939–1945

The world is about to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. The cultural historian Paul Fussell uses the occasion to remind us of the horrific and gruesome nature of physical combat, a reality that is all too often concealed by that minimizing rubric “conventional war.” “America,” he writes, “has not yet understood what the Second World War was like.”

by PAUL FUSSELL

56 KIDS AS CAPITAL

How much are we willing to pay to bring up other people's children—the children whom the United States will need to support an aging population and safeguard the nation's economic future? More out of necessity than out of choice, a new redistributive politics is emerging; it is a politics of redistribution from the childless to the child-rearing.

by JONATHAN RAUCH

62 “HEY, LET ME OUTTA HERE!”

The nation's ventriloquists gather by the hundreds in Kentucky every summer for their annual convention. Our correspondent was there.

by CULLEN MURPHY



BOOKS

- 84 A NINETEENTH-
CENTURY NIXON**
*Andrew Johnson:
A Biography,*
by Hans L. Trefousse
by JAMES M. MCPHERSON

- 89 ROMAN RAPTURE**
Italian Days,
*by Barbara Grizzuti
Harrison*
by CORBY KUMMER

- 91 BRIEF REVIEWS**
by PHOEBE-LOU ADAMS

ARTS AND LEISURE

- 73 ART:**
**ANDY WARHOL
THE PAINTER**
Warhol was stimulated by the thought of effortless-ness. He gave new life to the idea of a light touch.
by SANFORD SCHWARTZ
- 78 DANCE:**
**IN PRAISE OF
THE POLKA**
Born amid the revolutions of nineteenth-century Europe, this dance ill deserves its reputation as a moronic form of recreation.
by ROBERT P. CREASE

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

- 4 745 BOYLSTON STREET/
CONTRIBUTORS**
- 6 LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR**
- 12 THE AUGUST ALMANAC**
- 93 ACROSTIC No. 49**
by DOROTHY OSBORNE
- 95 THE PUZZLER**
*by EMILY COX AND
HENRY RATHVON*
- 96 WORD WATCH**
by ANNE H. SOUKHANOV

*Cover illustration by
Jean-Michel Folon*

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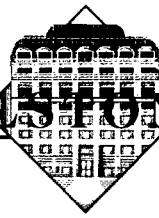
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WE KEEP UP WITH OUR Washington editor, James Fallows, who has spent the past three years in Asia, more easily than we do with most of our other writers and indeed with most family members. Fallows sends all his articles and revisions by MCI Mail, a computerized mail service that he praised in an *Atlantic* article on computers several years ago, and he often sends along reports of his own activities, too.

We have watched Fallows and his wife, Deborah, and their two sons, Tommy and Tad, slowly accustom themselves to domestic life under trying circumstances in Tokyo and Kuala Lumpur. Occasionally we will receive snapshots (by ordinary mail) of, for example, Fallows hooking up his computer to an outdoor pay phone in Malaysia in order to transmit copy, or Fallows at work in his Tokyo bathroom, from which he records commentary for the National Public Radio program *Morning Edition*, because it is the quietest room in the house. But the best snapshots are the ones in words, showing us places he has visited or events he has heard about. Of a swimming marathon from western Japan to the Siberian coastline he

wrote: "The waters are full of sharks, but [the participants] have what they claim is a foolproof solution: when sharks are sighted, everyone jumps in the water and swims in one big clump. This supposedly makes the shark think that the target creature is much bigger than the shark itself. It is a skill developed on the subways here."

Fallows's article in this issue, on splits in the community of American specialists on Japan, arrived in chunks, because Fallows was hard pressed to escape journalists asking him about his May cover story, "Containing Japan." Fallows suddenly found himself explaining his position to nearly every important newspaper, magazine, and television station in the country, and also to diplomats and government officials. "One clear lesson," he wrote, "is that anything written about Japan in the United States is also written to Japan."

Fallows plans to return next month to America, where he will begin writing a book about the United States and Japan. Luckily, MCI Mail works as well from Washington as from Tokyo. Some staff members have become attached to doing without the phone.
—THE EDITORS



CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL FUSSELL ("The Real War 1939–1945") holds the Donald T. Regan Chair of English Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. During the Second World War he served with the 103rd Infantry Division in France and Germany. Fussell is the author of numerous books, including *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), for which he received a National Book Award in 1976. His article in this issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* is adapted from his new book, *Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*, which will be published next month by Oxford University Press.

JEAN-MICHEL FOLON (cover artist) has achieved international recognition for his watercolors, prints, posters, murals, and tapestries. A major exhibition of his work will open next January at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City.

JONATHAN RAUCH ("Kids as Capital") writes on economic issues for *National Journal*. His article "Is the Deficit Really So Bad?" was *The Atlantic's* cover story last February.

CULLEN MURPHY ("Hey, Let Me Outta Here!") is the managing editor of *The Atlantic*.

JAMES FALLOWS ("Tokyo: The Japan-Handlers"), *The Atlantic's* Washington editor, has been writing for the magazine from Asia for the past three years. His latest book, *More Like Us: Making America Great Again*, was published in March by Houghton Mifflin.

NATALIE ANGIER ("Environment: Saving the Cracids") is an adjunct professor of environmental and science reporting at New York University's Graduate School of Journalism. She is the author of *Natural Obsessions: The Search for the Onco-gene* (1988).

ANNE STEVENSON ("Stone Fig") is the author of several books of poetry. Her most recent book, *Bitter Fame: A Life of Sylvia Plath*, will be published this month.

DEBORAH CHANLEY WEISS ("Someplace Like New Jersey") directs the guardianship program for the Association for Retarded Citizens, in Monroe County, New York. This is the first short story she has published in *The Atlantic*.

RALPH BURNS ("Barbed Wire") is the author of two collections of poetry, *Us* (1983) and *Any Given Day* (1985).

GUY BILLOUT ("Instant") has received two gold medals and two silver medals from the Society of Illustrators. His drawings appear often in *The Atlantic*.

DONALD HALL ("Material") is the author of numerous books of poetry, the most recent of which, *The One Day*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award for poetry in 1989.

JAMES M. MCPHERSON ("A Nineteenth-Century Nixon") is the Edwards Professor of American History at Princeton University. He won a Pulitzer Prize last year for his book *Battle Cry of Freedom*.

SANFORD SCHWARTZ ("Andy Warhol the Painter") is the author of *The Art Presence* (1982).

ROBERT P. CREASE ("In Praise of the Polka") is an assistant professor of philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He is the co-author, with Charles Mann, of *The Second Creation* (1986).

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



CONTAINING JAPAN

Regarding James Fallows's "Containing Japan" (May *Atlantic*):

On the one side, a nation whose citizens save and reinvest much of what they earn, work from dawn to dusk without complaint, respect authority and feel deep loyalty toward one another, forgo luxuries, live in tiny apartments hours away from their jobs, conscientiously educate their children and instill in them self-discipline, produce for the rest of the world products of high quality at relatively low cost, and willingly accept for their labors foreign currencies whose values continually decline.

On the other side, a nation whose citizens spend almost everything they earn, borrow to the hilt, fail to invest for their future, work erratically, take long vacations, demand numerous benefits from their government, feel no particular loyalty to their bosses or employees, don't educate or instill self-discipline in their kids, produce products of poor quality, and turn their capital markets into giant casinos and their corporations into tradable commodities.

James Fallows tells us that the former group is "eroding the strength" of the latter, and that the latter must therefore defend its interests and values by "constraining" the former. I don't quite get his logic.

ROBERT B. REICH
*Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.*

The main theme running through James Fallows's writing—that Japan is basically different from other Western nations both economically and politically—seems to me to be a gross exaggeration. Even after skimming through Karel van Wolferen's *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, which I found fascinating, I cannot agree that Japan is inherently so different that neither the laws of economics nor democratic rules can be applied.

For example, Fallows claims that Japanese economic growth is unbalanced and destructive. Unbalanced it may be, but destructive it is not. Certain aspects may have been destructive, of course, but these are not limited to Japanese growth, and they are correctable. On the whole, Japanese growth has been of benefit to other nations, and thus has been welcomed. To deny the merits of economic growth in Japan or, for that matter, in any other nation would be unrealistic in this interdependent world, and would run counter to the ideals of progress and prosperity long associated with the United States.

MICHIO MIZOGUCHI
*Ambassador
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Tokyo, Japan*

James Fallows is absolutely correct in saying that relations between Japan and the United States must become more frank and open to criticism. In the spirit of such frankness, I feel compelled to ask Fallows by what right he tells Japan to moderate its success or risk being "contained" by agents unspecified?

Certainly, what Fallows says about Japan's relatively poor living standards is factually unarguable, but it should be equally obvious that by freely electing the politicians and supporting the corporations that have created Japan's nominal success, we Japanese have made a rational decision to make certain sacrifices today in the hope of creating what we perceive to be a more secure future.

We have accumulated wealth now from our decades of hard work and careful planning; would you criticize us for making sound investments and leveraging that wealth to buy the means to feed our people? Of course, American ranchers *could* provide the beef we will now import, but what if the political current changes? (We will not soon forget Richard Nixon's use of soybean

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exports as a political weapon in the early 1970s.) Would Fallows prefer that the money be spent building uninhabitable cities in the deserts, as many Arab states misguidedly did with *their* wealth?

Yes, our companies have been amazingly successful at coping with the strong yen and U.S. demands, by shifting production overseas. Yes, Japanese consumers pay higher prices than American consumers without complaint. And no, we are not especially enamored of American goods, because we believe that Japanese quality is, in general, superior to yours and that it is better for our resource-impo- verished country to produce as much as we can ourselves, even when consumers bear the burden. But we hope that America, from which we received our Constitution, still believes that we, as a sovereign people, have the right to enjoy (or suffer) these as we wish.

Surveys consistently indicate that the Japanese are among the most content and long-lived people in the world. We are generally happy in our

lives possibly because we love to be so productive. Is this so very wrong by Fallows's standards? If so, then perhaps we need "containment," but the implications of that sinister term frighten me to my very soul.

JUN WATANABE
Tokyo, Japan

James Fallows says, "Compared with aid from the United States or Europe, a high proportion of Japanese aid is formally or informally 'tied,' so it comes back as purchase orders for Japanese equipment or contracts for Japanese construction firms."

I must question his source. According to the authoritative Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in Paris, 28 percent of Japanese overseas-development assistance in 1984 (the latest year for which figures are available) was tied to the purchase of Japanese goods. For the United States the same measurement was 55 percent.

ERIC J. EVANS
Brookline, Mass.

James Fallows replies:

The foreign-aid statistic that Eric Evans cites is correct but misleading, because it refers to explicitly tied aid. The Japanese Foreign Ministry admits that in practice Japanese foreign aid has been very closely tied to purchases from Japanese firms. The Japanese government says that it is working hard to reduce the "tied" percentage.

I am grateful for Jun Watanabe's letter, since it illustrates many attitudes I tried to describe in my article. One is that Japan does not, in its political system or in the beliefs of many of its people, accept the fundamental principles of capitalist trade. Mr. Watanabe says that Japanese feel that "it is better for our resource-impo- verished country to produce as much as we can ourselves, even when consumers bear the burden." The purpose of my article was to develop the idea that Mr. Watanabe sums up in one sentence: Japan remains chronically biased against imports and balanced trade, and will continue to impose sacrifices on its people in order to limit its need to buy high-

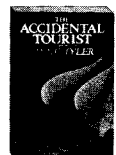
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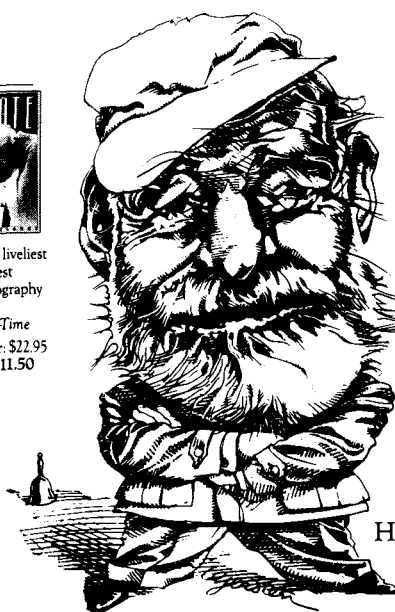
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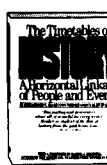
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value products from outsiders. It is of course Japan's full and proper right to hold such a bias, but it is the outsider's right to call the resulting system by its proper names: mercantilism, superprotectionism, a one-sided view of trade.

Mr. Watanabe says that "we Japanese" benefit from the country's policy. This term, or its Japanese counterpart, *ware-ware nihonjin*, is used routinely by Japanese officials and spokesmen and says much about an us-against-the-world view. He says that Japan makes overseas investments in order to "feed our people," yet if Japan were really concerned about having enough food, it would stop subsidizing its own extremely high-cost farmers and permit its consumers to buy imported rice for one eighth the price. Most significant of all, Mr. Watanabe accuses me of insisting that Japan change its culture, or of challenging Japan's sovereign right to adopt any policy it chooses. I am doing neither thing. Japan has every right to discourage imports, suppress its consumers' inter-

ests, and build big trade surpluses. But it has no absolute right to pursue this policy *and still be considered a free-trading state*. I was not asking Japan to change anything about its culture; my article asked Americans to change their view of Japan.

The great question concerning Japan's future is whether Mr. Watanabe's letter or Ambassador Mizoguchi's is a better guide to Japan's beliefs and intentions. I hope that Ambassador Mizoguchi's views prevail someday. I know that Mr. Watanabe's are more typical now.

Americans have a particularly hard time imagining that another society's values could be so different from ours. This big-hearted innocence is one of the finest things about America, but it can lead us astray. One point in Robert Reich's smug letter illustrates the problem. To him, as to most Americans who have taken economics courses, the Japanese willingness to "accept for their labors foreign currencies whose values continually decline" is some kind of bemusing irrationality. But

these pathetic currencies can be converted into ownership of manufacturing companies, banks, and the other "strategic assets" that constitute a nation's wealth and provide the basis for true sovereignty.

Of course America's productive failures explain much of the trade imbalance. But it is another sign of American innocence to think they explain it all. The logical complication that eludes Mr. Reich is that *at any given level of American industrial competence*, Japan will be structurally biased against high-tech imports and will therefore wear down another country's competitive edge. Despite all the familiar problems Mr. Reich lists, the U.S. productive base has not totally collapsed. To choose only the most obvious examples, firms in the United States produce supercomputers, fighter airplanes, fiber-optic equipment, and satellites that are either better or cheaper, or both, than what Japanese firms produce. Yet Japan does everything possible to prevent imports of these products.



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FALLING BIRTH RATES

If I were to share R. J. Herrnstein's seemingly unquestioning faith in the accuracy of IQ as an effective measure of human intelligence ("IQ and Falling Birth Rates," May *Atlantic*), then I would conclude that people of the lower economic strata, including a large segment of the black population, are innately less intelligent than their more affluent and privileged contemporaries. Herrnstein doesn't appear to consider that cultural and topical limitations may be intrinsic to IQ tests or that the alleged correspondence between high scores and job performance may be attributed to these same limitations. Certainly intelligence expresses itself in a number of ways, and I suspect that test-taking and job performance are but a fraction of them.

The essential problem is not so much that so-called bright women are not having as many children as it is that those of lesser opportunity and education are perpetually ensnared in an environment barren of economic advantage and hostile to intellectual development.

NICHOLAS STERN
Seattle, Wash.

Herrnstein's article, while it reports the interesting fact of falling birth rates among intelligent women, does not discuss the issue in a way that is meaningful to intelligent women. In fact, worded and argued as it is, the article suggests some very disturbing social trends in this country, particularly for women. For instance, Herrnstein makes the strange and erroneous assumption that the decision of intelligent *people* not to have many children has been a choice particular to women. Haven't intelligent men also been deterred from having large families? It seems obvious to me that the values and life conditions of a culture will affect personal decisions by all people—the acculturated (which is, finally, what I believe Herrnstein means by "intelligent") ones more so. But if acculturated people are not showing a certain behavior, it's important to look at why. Herrnstein skirts this issue, and by omission implies that women are responsible for a problem that is clearly much more far-reaching.

By merely describing a phenomenon, without suggesting its origins or

ramifications, the article puts both blame and responsibility on women. Furthermore, it discounts the contributions of women to the culture and economy by focusing on the strengths of future progeny. Herrnstein ignores the question of the loss to our culture of the contributions of women of genius and energy who might be sacrificing their talents to have large families, on the statistically unlikely chance that their children will make a difference.

PATRICIA LLOYD
Brookline, Mass.

The sexist assumptions behind R. J. Herrnstein's thesis are revealed in the conclusion of "IQ and Falling Birth Rates," which states, "We should stop telling bright young women that they make poor use of their lives by bearing and raising children, as commencement speakers . . . have implied to educated women for decades." Women who are "bright" and "educated" presumably make childbearing decisions on the basis of more than the advice of "commencement speakers." In addition, when and if it becomes a wise decision to stay home and raise children, commencement speakers and others will undoubtedly exhort *both* men and women to do so. Frankly, I won't be holding my breath.

BARBARA RODMAN
Fort Collins, Colo.

I do not know Margaret Atwood personally, but my guess is that she would be stunned by R. J. Herrnstein's use of her novel *The Handmaid's Tale* to instruct an America whose productivity will fall because intelligent American women have become unwilling to dedicate their lives to bearing and raising children.

According to Herrnstein, the decrease in American productivity is caused by the failure of American employers to use IQ tests in order to hire the most intelligent people—that is, the most productive people. Moreover, the supply of intelligent people is menaced by women's liberation. In order to reproduce intelligent people, Herrnstein says, bright women must make more babies. The case of Japan is offered as proof: "upper-class Japanese [do] not bear fewer children than women lower on the social ladder," because they have not experienced as much "cultural and economic liber-

ation" as American women. His lesson is quite clear: America, select intelligent women (more likely to be found among the well-to-do), give them a superb education to further hone their innate talents (the author shrinks from the term *genetic*), and on their graduation day let commencement speakers urge that they honorably and productively give part of their lives to bear and raise children. However, Professor Herrnstein leaves one question unanswered: How shall these commencement speakers express delicately to these smart women that their social obligation is to bear children in order to make America more competitive with Japan?

FRANCINE MICHAUD
Toronto, Ontario

The declining IQs of women having babies is a predictor of an increasingly stupid population only if IQ tests are fair and accurate measures of intelligence. They may be better measures of social status; as Herrnstein admits, intelligence is related to education. The assertion that smart women are having fewer babies is less an argument for population planning than a mandate for educational and economic reform.

Childbearing is a private pleasure, not a public responsibility. Women who are smart enough to exercise reproductive autonomy are smart enough to understand that America's competitive edge does not depend on their willingness to breed; it depends on a communal commitment to social change.

WENDY KAMINER
*Radcliffe College
Cambridge, Mass.*

R. J. Herrnstein replies:

My article described two facts: First, lifetime female fertility in the United States (and in other developed countries) is at present negatively correlated with scores on objective tests of cognitive aptitude, such as IQ tests. Second, worker productivity in many common occupations is positively correlated with those scores.

As long as parents and children resemble each other in cognitive aptitude, whether the resemblance is a consequence of genetic or environmental factors, it follows that the higher fertility of women at the lower end



of the distribution of scores will lower the average aptitude of the population as a whole, unless some countervailing force is pushing aptitude up while the reproductive patterns are pushing it down. The possibility therefore exists that the economic productivity of our society will decline from generation to generation for demographic reasons.

Several of my critics are dubious about the validity of objective tests of intelligence in measuring intelligence. But the observed correlations between scores on those tests on the one hand and worker productivity and female fertility on the other are beyond dispute. Educational techniques could in principle neutralize the demographic issues, but we do not now know much about the techniques to use. My article called for more research along those lines.

My article also stated—evidently unsuccessfully, judging from the comments—that I would oppose any attempt to turn back the clock on the liberation of women from sexual op-

pression. Female liberation has my personal support, whether or not it may in economic terms affect fertility counterproductively. I do not blame women for the potential counterproductive effects; indeed, insofar as men still hold most of the economic and political power in our society, the solutions will depend disproportionately on the actions of men.

ADVICE & CONSENT

I knew Edward Weeks (1898–1989) only from reading his many columns and articles in *The Atlantic Monthly*, beginning in the fall of 1947, when I was a freshman at Yale and was introduced to the magazine by a friend, and in later years from his books, *My Green Years* (1973) and *Writers and Friends* (1981).

Edward Weeks said magazines are an American institution. As editor, he personalized *The Atlantic Monthly* and made it one of the best.

DONALD L. CLARK
San Jose, Calif.

Anne H. Soukhanov supplies helpful information on the slang term *mushroom* (an innocent bystander killed by dueling gunmen) in the March Word Watch. I wonder, though, if a more likely etymology might involve the thugs' familiarity with the video-arcade game Centipede, in which the player tries to shoot a crawling centipede that dodges among mushrooms; the player gets points for eliminating mushrooms even if he does not succeed in killing the centipede itself.

RANDY F. NELSON
Davidson, N.C.

I am overjoyed by the appearance of really remarkable fiction in your pages. Hanif Kureishi's "Esther" is a brilliant piece, and one that reflects experiences common to many of your readers. Thank you for selecting it. You do more to affect the way we perceive the times we live in with stories like this than with most of your researched political pieces.

STEPHEN VAN BEEK
Toronto, Ontario

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THE AUGUST ALMANAC

HEALTH & SAFETY

The nation's mail carriers are far more likely than the average American to be bitten by a dog; owing primarily to the heat, more attacks on mailmen occur at this time of year than at any other. The U.S. Postal Service launched a dog-bite awareness campaign in 1982 to encourage dog owners to keep their pets at bay when the mail carrier comes, and the number of attacks per year has been reduced by about 4,000, to 2,800. The Postal Service has been pressing mail carriers to sue dog owners after an attack, and it has been willing to represent them in court when necessary.

DEMOGRAPHICS

As children prepare this month to return to school, their parents will buy some 75 to 80 percent of the lunch boxes (known in the trade as "school lunch kits") that are sold in the year. Almost all the lunch boxes in America are manufactured by Aladdin or Thermos and feature licensed characters. The companies predict that the top-selling lunch boxes this year will include Hollywood Mickey, Nintendo, G.I. Joe, and Sesame Street (for Aladdin) and Batman, Barbie, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and Real Ghostbusters (for Thermos). According to Scott Bruce, a lunch-box collector and the publisher of *Hot Boxing*, a quarterly newsletter, it was a Hopalong Cassidy lunch box produced in 1950 that first sent sales into the millions.



GOVERNMENT

August 4, Congress adjourns for its month-long August recess. During this time the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget will be busy preparing their initial estimates of what the federal deficit will amount to in fiscal year 1990, which begins next October 1. The CBO's report will be issued on August 20, the OMB's on August 25. Under the terms of a 1987 debt-limit bill the allowable size of the deficit in 1990 is \$110 billion or less, and the federal budget will have to be trimmed accordingly. The August estimates, based on a "snapshot" taken on August 15 of all budget legislation then in effect, will be the first indication of how much progress the government has made toward its goal. Last year the CBO report, which is advisory, showed the projected deficit exceeding the allowable size; the OMB estimate, which is the one that Congress actually relies on, showed the federal budget just squeaking by.



THE SKIES

August 1, New Moon. 10, the start of summer's dog days; Sirius, the Dog Star, is visible in the eastern skies just before sunrise. 11-12, the Perseid meteor shower, one of the most trustworthy, peaks tonight; the best time to look is after midnight. 16-17, Full Moon, also known this month as the Corn or Grain Moon. The Moon will be eclipsed tonight, slipping into Earth's shadow at 9:21 P.M. EDT. A total eclipse will begin at 10:20 P.M. and last for an hour and 36 minutes, an extraordinary length of time. 24, the *Voyager 2* spacecraft will approach the planet Neptune. 31, New Moon.



Q&A

Can dreaming that it's time to wake up cause one actually to wake up?

Often it can. The unconscious can be an uncannily reliable alarm clock, and it may employ dream imagery—a scenario of the dreamer waking and dressing, for instance—to this end. But, insidiously, such a dream may also cause one to stay asleep. In a so-called dream of convenience, the same sorts of images persuade the dreamer that the morning's tasks have been seen to, thereby lulling him into oversleeping. What about dreaming of one's own death? Firsthand anecdotal evidence suggests that, schoolyard rumors to the contrary, dreaming that one has died does not bring on death. The discomfiting possibility remains, of course, that those who have reported such dreams are the exceptions and not the rule. We'll never know.

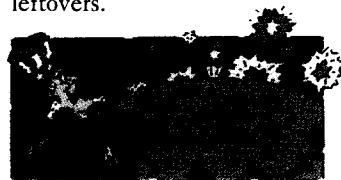
EXPIRING PATENT

No. 3,680,499. Hijack-prevention system. "A hijack prevention system for an airplane wherein a conventional appearing telephone is positioned outside the pilot's cabin on the airplane. The telephone is provided with apertures for the emission of an incapacitating gas. The emission of the gas is controlled by the pilot or copilot from within the pilot's cabin. When a hijacker identifies himself during flight, the stewardess requests the hijacker to converse with the pilot over the telephone."



FOOD

August 5, the world's largest hamburger will be cooked in Seymour, Wisconsin. This year has been hailed by some as the 100th birthday of the hamburger, but Seymour residents claim that the hamburger was invented in their town at the Outagamie County Fair of 1885 by a boy named Charlie Nagreen, and they want national recognition for Nagreen and Seymour. The hamburger, which will be the size of a two-car garage, is expected to weigh some 5,200 pounds, and it will take two hours to cook. Some 15,000 people will be needed to eat it. A site in Seymour may be set aside for the construction of a World Hamburger Hall of Fame, or for leftovers.



50 YEARS AGO

Graham Hutton, writing in the August, 1939, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "Americans may be surprised to find that they will not even be asked or needed to play any military part in the short next war. But when it is over, America's rôle will almost certainly become paramount. It will be peaceful, not destructive. And it will be a task fully as big as that of one, two, and three centuries ago, when Europe opened up the New World. After the next war in Europe, America may be called on to reopen the Old World. America—or Russia. They are the two largest and most self-sufficing units in the western world. They can stand longer and endure more than any other power to-day. They both stretch from Pacific to Atlantic. The outcome of whatever happens in between them, in Europe, will determine their own destinies."



Some enchanted evenings.

This summer, *Evening at Pops* will celebrate its 20th Anniversary on public television with 12 star-studded programs. Carol Channing, Sammy Davis, Jr., Loretta Lynn and Crystal Gayle, Andre Previn, Kathleen Battle, and Barbara Cook are among the headliners performing with John Williams and The Boston Pops Orchestra this season.

Digital is proud to support public television by underwriting this great American tradition. *Evening at Pops* begins June 23 on public television. Check your local listings. And join us for 12 nights to remember.

REPORTS & COMMENT

TOKYO

The Japan-Handlers

U.S. policy toward Japan is determined to an unusual degree by American specialists living in Japan, and tensions divide those specialists

LIVING IN JAPAN these days is exciting for the same reason that it is exhausting: everyone you meet takes the place so seriously. Most conversations here, at least most conversations that I have, turn into intense, lapel-grabbing exchanges about why Japan is the way it is, what's good and bad about it, whether it really is becoming more like the rest of the world, whether it is fated to rise or to fall. I was starting to feel embarrassed about the obsessive nature of these day-after-day discussions until I met a man who came here in 1946, as part of Douglas MacArthur's Occupation forces, and never left. He shook my hand and started saying, "What I don't understand about the Japanese is . . ."

The main drawback to this intensity, apart from the wear and tear on people's nerves, is that it tends to produce polarized "love 'em or hate 'em" opinions. In principle America's policy toward Japan should be a smooth, steady combination of friendly and cautionary signals—friendly because of the overall partnership between Japan and the United States, cautionary because of the never-ending trade disputes. In practice the combination is anything but steady.

Japan's attitude toward the United States is not much more consistent. The fundamental reason for each side's divided view of the other is the strange nature of the relationship itself. (People usually speak of "the relationship" as if it were a proper noun. To Japanese-speakers it's the *nichi-bei kankei*.) Each country is the other's most valuable but also most vexing partner. The built-in confusion is compounded by a human factor—the role of the "Japan-handlers" in America's dealings with Japan.

A generation from now the United States will have many more people than it does at present who know how to operate in Japan and in Japanese. Every day on the subway I see Westerners in their twenties with Japanese-language textbooks in their hands. The scruffy-looking ones typically

teach in commercial *eikaiwa* (English-conversation) schools; the thin, leggy women work as models for Japanese advertising agencies—about half the faces in commercials here are foreign. Many young foreigners hoard the yen they earn, while living in "six-mat" rooms (about ten feet square) and trying to learn Japanese. Even now, before this crop matures, the United States has a larger supply of people experienced in Japan than any European country does. Because of the postwar Occupation, the post-Occupation presence of the United States military, and today's extensive U.S.-Japanese contacts in business, academics, and government, thousands upon thousands of Americans have worked in Japan, as compared with hundreds upon hundreds of Europeans.

Still, millions upon millions of Americans know nothing about Japan except that it makes cars. Americans who are comfortable with Japanese culture are few compared with Americans who feel that they instinctively understand England or Mexico or other European or Latin American societies. This inevitably means that managing the relationship falls into the hands of specialists to an extent that the management of U.S.-Italian or U.S.-French relations never has or will.

WHO ARE THESE specialists? They can be divided into four groups. Members of any given group differ from one another in various ways—complexity of motives, experience in Japan—but for one reason or another most of the members of all four groups worry more about sustaining the relationship than about economic imbalances between the United States and Japan. One unfortunate result of this tendency is to intensify the



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AUGUST 1989

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Car and Driver drove a Saab. And found out something you can find out for yourself at your local Saab dealer.

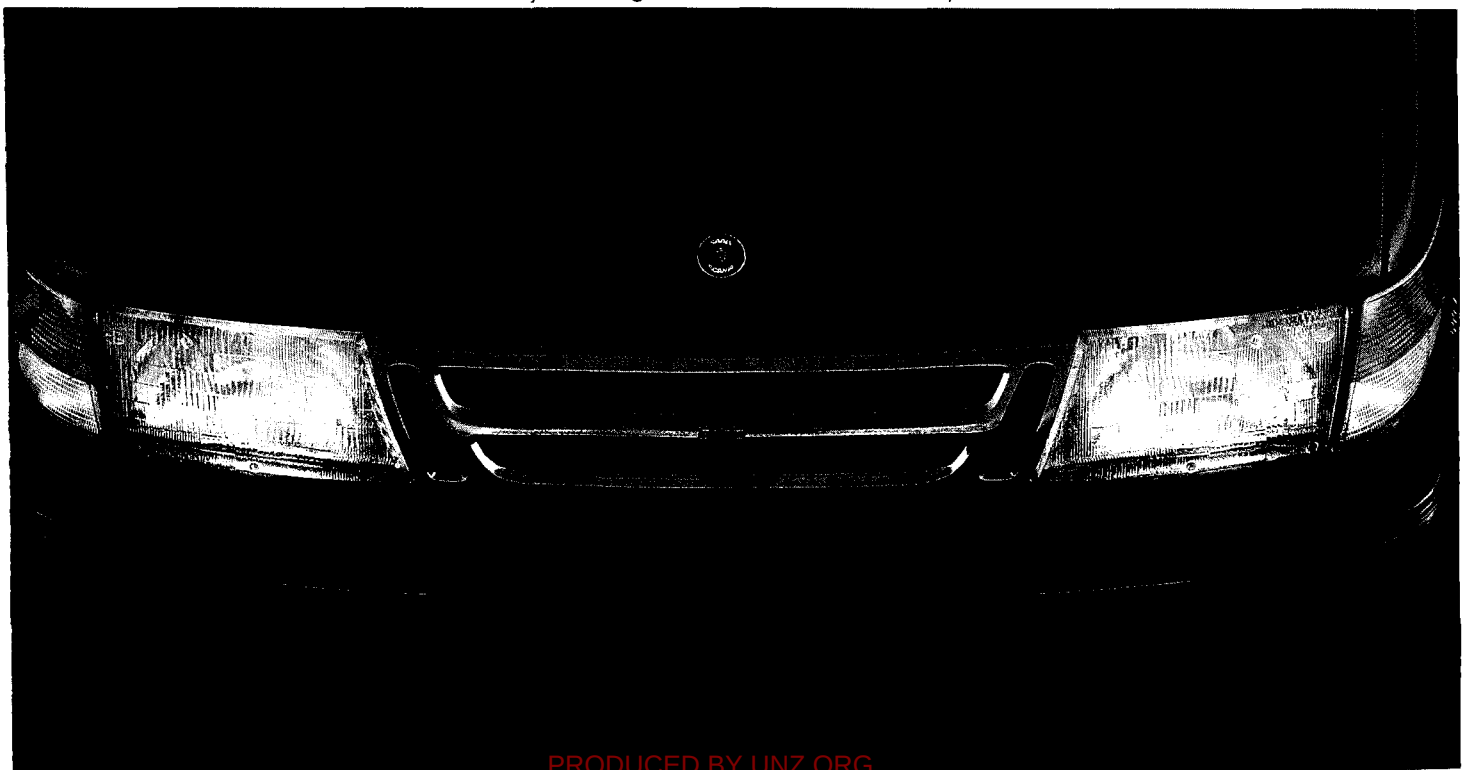
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cycle of American exasperation with Japan. Because the expert Japan-handling groups are afraid that American Japan-bashers will disrupt the relationship, they usually tell Americans that everything is fine: the Japanese economy is opening itself to exports, outsiders must be patient because change in Japan takes a long time, we must above all guard against the threat of protectionism in the United States. Then, inevitably, a dispute like the one over the FSX fighter plane flares up, and Americans lash out with a sense of surprise and betrayal brought on by the previous reassurances from the pros.

The first group of Japan specialists is not at all interested in economic disputes. It is made up of American military officials and "pol-mil types"—political-military strategists who are mainly concerned about the diplomatic and military face-off between Soviet-bloc and noncommunist nations. Their policy toward Japan could not be simpler: Don't rock the boat.

When the pol-mil group looks at the relationship, it sees circumstances that could scarcely be improved. Among America's allies, Japan is the staunchest and politically least troublesome. Japan almost never takes a diplomatic position at variance with American interests. (The only exceptions are quiet arrangements that Japan works out when its raw-material anxieties are aroused, such as its acquiescence in the Arab boycott of Israel and its extensive trade with South Africa.) Its military essentially functions as a subunit of the U.S. Pacific command; the U.S. bases on Japanese territory are the command's most valuable sites in the Pacific. Indeed, in some Japanese soldiers' eyes there is still a gleam of respect for the big, strong American army with its big, advanced weapons. American businessmen working in Japan have not seen such a gleam in years.

In any negotiation with Japan, therefore, the pol-mil instinct is to preserve the status quo and promote cooperation—which usually means stifling complaints about the Japanese trade surplus. There is a peculiar moral edge to the pol-mil position, which is a surprising contrast to the attitude of the famous military-industrial complex in the United States. When congressional investigators ask why American weap-

ons cost so much, Pentagon officials often stand as partners with U.S. defense contractors, explaining that the companies are doing their best to serve the nation's needs. Once they get to Japan, however, U.S. officers begin talking about corporate America with Ralph Nader-like scorn. The Pentagon's Japan-handlers have usually studied Japanese to some extent and try hard to get along with their counterparts. Their own dealings with the Japanese are pleasant and satisfactory, so when they hear complaints from American businesses, they think it's just whining from a bunch of overpaid, shortsighted peddlers who don't appre-



ciate Japan's strategic value to the United States and have never made enough of an effort to understand the Japanese market.

Not long ago I was having lunch in Tokyo with four Japanese military officials and one uniformed officer of the U.S. Navy. "I ask my friends in America: Please, work a little harder," one of the Japanese men said, as his solution to trade problems. "Yeah, the barriers are down now," the Navy officer volunteered. "If American businessmen would get on the ball for once and produce something worth buying, they'd be making those sales." (I looked at him, thinking, My tax dollars are paying for this?)

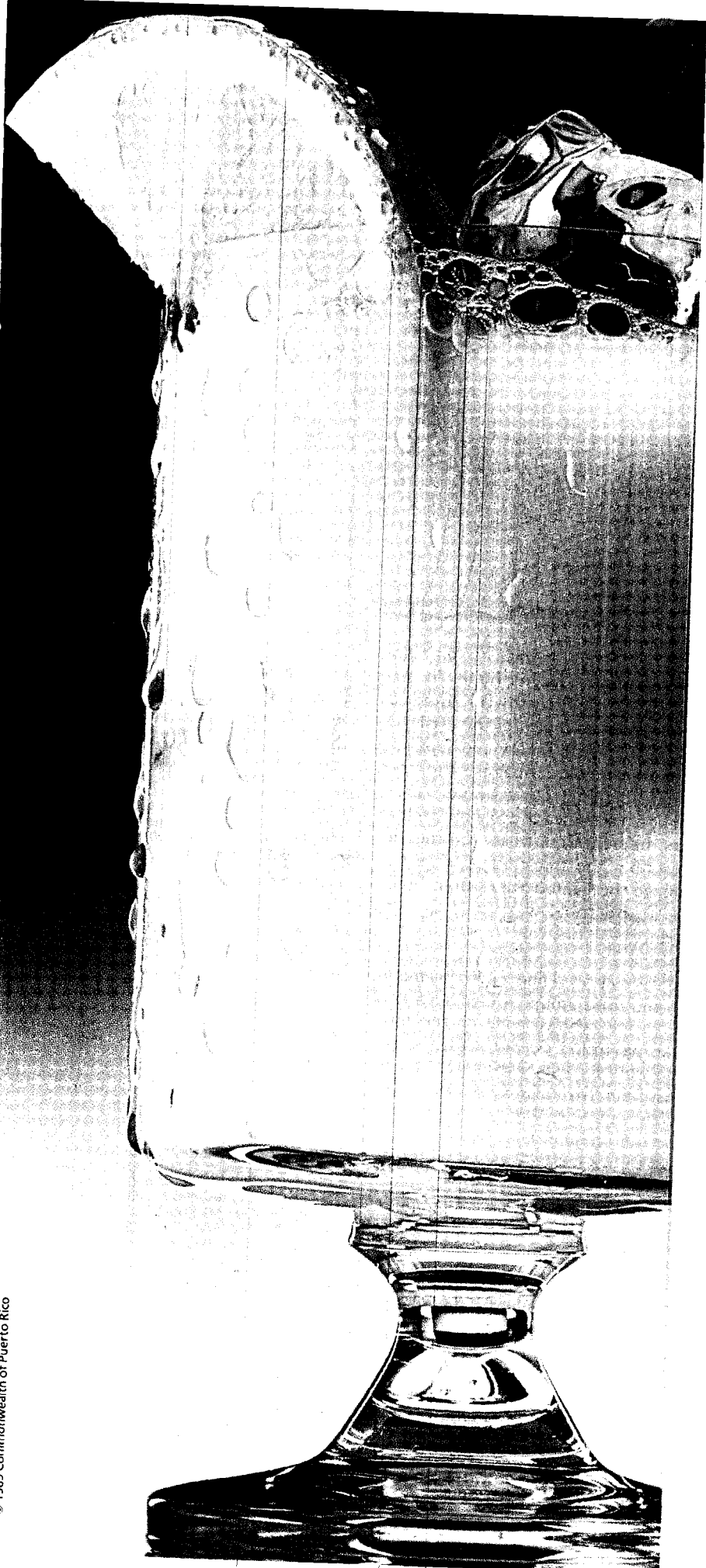
More and more of the negotiations

with Japan reveal the tension between the pol-mil and commercial sides of U.S. national interests. To give one illustration out of several dozen possibilities: From the pol-mil perspective, it would be shrewd of the Pentagon to grant some Star Wars research contracts to Japanese firms. It would tie the Japanese government's prestige to the overall project, and give the U.S. military a chance to use whatever technology the Japanese companies produce. From the U.S. commercial point of view, of course, it would be better to keep the research contracts at home. That way U.S. companies would have a head start in exploiting any commercial technology that comes from the work. In the conflict between these arguments the pol-mil side won; last year the Pentagon granted a research contract to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, and to another research team, headed by the U.S. firm LTV, of which Kawasaki Heavy is a part.

THE SECOND GROUP also promotes a simple all-is-well view. It consists of pure free traders—people so thoroughly convinced of the wisdom of free trade that they assume that everyone else in the world feels the same way.

Members of this group tend to be located someplace other than Japan. Few Japanese think it wise to open all their markets—including agriculture, small-scale retail, finance, and so on—to free competition. ("They don't believe in the invisible hand," the British sociologist and Japanophile Ronald Dore has said of the Japanese. "They believe—like all good Confucianists—that you cannot get a decent, moral society, not even an efficient society, simply out of the mechanisms of the market powered by the motivational fuel of self-interest.") Most foreigners who have done business here realize that no matter how compelling free trade is as a theory, it is not the most useful tool for understanding how modern Japan works. The Americans who produce the most confident-sounding speeches, editorials, and columns about Japan's free-market behavior have generally never lived in Japan or tried to do business here.

The pure free traders are mostly concentrated in places a safe distance away—in Washington, New York, and Chicago—where they can exert influ-



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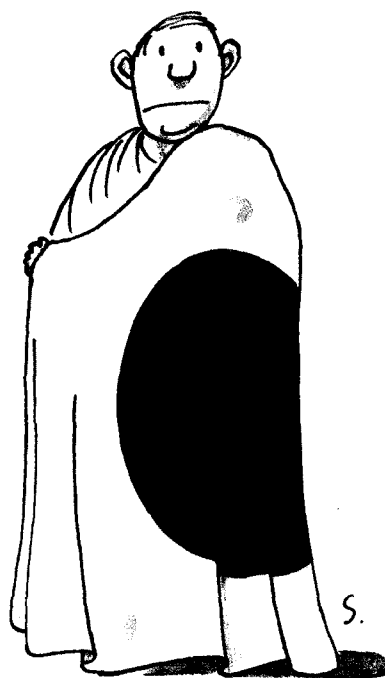
ence over press coverage and public opinion and from where in the Reagan years they had a disproportionate influence on American policy. Their argument is that the Japanese market can't really be as distorted as its critics contend, since Japanese consumers are like consumers anywhere else on earth and will insist on lower prices and a higher standard of living. The free traders contend that the United States should not waste its time complaining about Japanese protectionism, because the only people who are hurt by it are consumers in Japan. For instance, U.S. trade negotiators routinely complain about barriers that keep out of the Japanese market technically excellent American supercomputers, made by Cray Research and (until it recently quit the business) the Control Data Corporation. Their Japanese competitors, Fujitsu, Hitachi, and NEC, have "sold" supercomputers to Japanese universities at 70 or 80 percent below list price, in order to gain market share against Cray and Control Data. In 1987 there was a meeting at the White House to discuss supercomputers. According to a man who was there, one of the free traders on the Council of Economic Advisers said, "If the Japanese don't want to buy a Cray, that's fine; they're simply denying themselves the use of the world's best machine." When a trade negotiator explained that Japanese manufacturers were unloading their machines at fire-sale prices, the CEA man said, "Great—where can I get mine?"

This consumer-first logic is all but unassailable on its own terms, and it is worth bearing in mind as the goal for an open trading system. The danger, however, is that it leads to a kind of flat-earth denial of reality. Three years ago the U.S. government was deciding whether to ask that the Japanese government guarantee American semiconductor-makers a certain share of the Japanese semiconductor market (rather than merely "urging" Japanese purchasers to buy more U.S. chips, which in the past had had no effect). According to a participant in the meetings, "One of the most prominent economists said it would be a terrible mistake to criticize Japan's protective measures for its own chip industry." If the United States did complain, "that would be an admission that government policies could protect and pro-

mote industries—which by definition they cannot." In his book *Trading Places*, Clyde Prestowitz provides many other examples of the clash between free-trade theory and Japanese economic reality. Because they can barely imagine that a whole society might have an idea of economic welfare very different from what their theories prescribe, the free-trade purists discourage the United States from thinking up practical ways to deal with Japan.

IT'S HARD TO find a polite name for the third group, which consists of people who've gone on the Japanese payroll. I do not mean people who work for Japanese-owned companies, from Toyota in Kentucky to CBS Records in New York, and quite naturally want their employers to prosper. I am talking instead about lobbyists, mouthpieces, hired guns—people paid to tilt U.S. government policy in a direction more favorable to Japan.

The spectacle of retired politicians promoting Japanese interests has attracted a lot of publicity in the United States, but the real significance is the imbalance it creates in the two nations' ability to influence each other. Last year Japan and the United States each felt one aspect of their national security threatened by the other country. The United States thought that its naval strength was jeopardized by Toshiba's sale of propeller-making machin-



ery to the Russians. Japan thought that its domestic order was threatened by yet another demand from the U.S. Rice Millers Association that Japan import foreign rice. The contrast between these two definitions of national security is in itself piquant, but there was an even bigger difference in how the problems were resolved. In the United States, Toshiba spent about \$9 million hiring an assortment of former congressmen and executive-branch officials to persuade Congress not to impose trade sanctions against the company. (Its representatives included Democrats like the former congressmen James Jones and Michael Barnes, and Republicans like the former White House advisers Leonard Garment and Richard Whalen.) The rice millers made their case to the U.S. and Japanese governments essentially on their own. Toshiba succeeded; the rice millers failed.

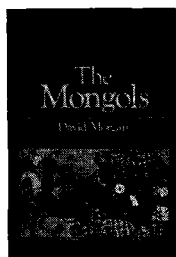
The point is not that Japan is somehow "cheating" by buying political influence—Americans are offering their services, and Japanese companies have the money to spend. Again, the imbalance in the countries' ability to influence each other is the point. America contains a class of lobbyists who are paid to help bend policy in another country's favor; Japan does not. More and more often I hear Japanese officials comparing Washington to Jakarta: both are capitals where political influence is available for a price. Indeed, some columns and articles have appeared in the Japanese press warning Japanese businessmen about the large-scale hiring of lobbyists in the United States. (The problem is, essentially, that the Americans "won't stay bought.") A friend who works for the U.S. government recently visited a prominent American business school, where a student told him this story of influence-buying.

The student was an American fluent in Japanese. He had spent the previous three years working at a Japanese-owned electronics plant in Japan. While he was there, the U.S. government accused the plant of dumping its chips, at prices below those permitted under the U.S. anti-dumping law. At that point the company hired two Americans who had just resigned from the Commerce Department. Weeks earlier they had helped draft the anti-dumping agreements that the company was now accused of violating.

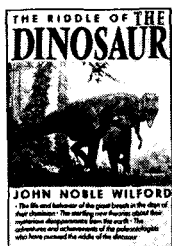
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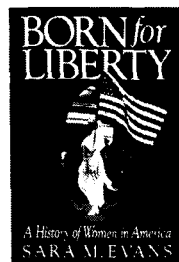
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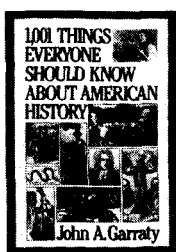
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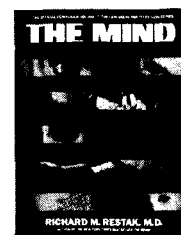
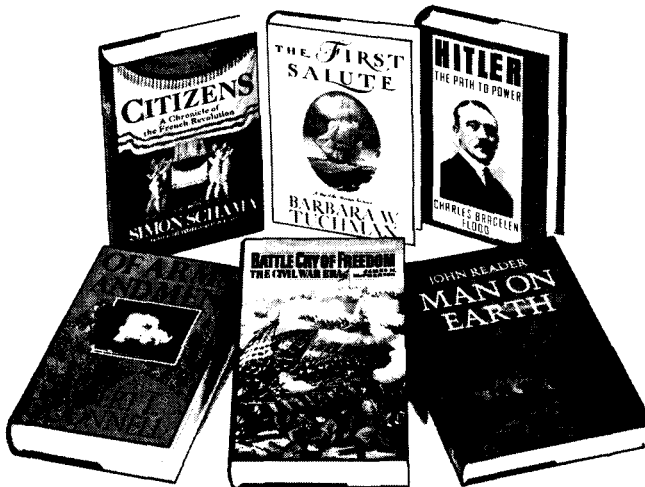


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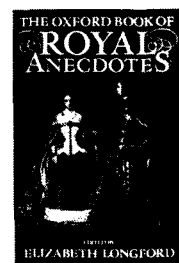
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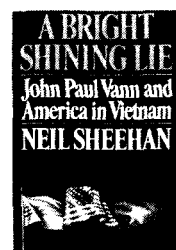
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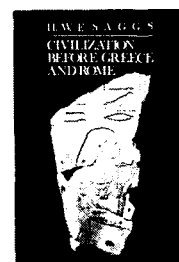
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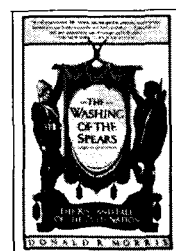
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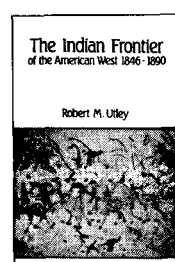
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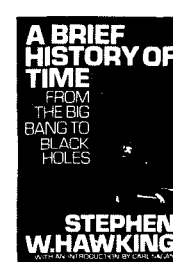
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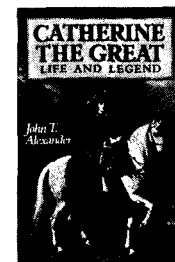
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"I never felt so humiliated in all my life," the student told my friend. "These guys came in and showed the company how to conceal all the damaging information. They knew exactly how to do it, because they knew where the U.S. inspectors would look. I saw the United States get bamboozled by a Japanese company that was willing to pay a lot of money"—and by Americans willing to do the bamboozling.

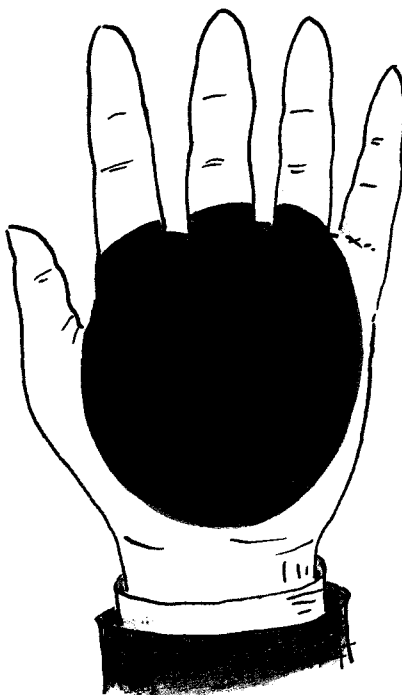
THE FOURTH GROUP is the most complex and interesting. These are the Japan-handlers proper—people who for one reason or another committed themselves early in their careers to learning about Japan. Now they find themselves playing major roles in the relationship, at a point in history when many of the things about Japan that originally attracted them have changed.

Because Japanese language and culture have not been mainstream interests in the United States, most adult Americans who are now fluent in Japanese have unusual histories. Some grew up in Japan as the children of missionaries or came here as college-age Mormon missionaries themselves. Many went through the military's Japanese-language program during and just after the Second World War. Indeed, this cadre of Occupation-era experts has heavily influenced America's impression of Japan for the past forty years. (It includes scholars and writers like Frank Gibney, Donald Richie, Edward Seidensticker, and Donald Keene, the business expert James Abegglen, and many others.) A few Americans decided in high school or college to make Japan their specialty—for example, Japan's current trade nemesis, Clyde Prestowitz. And through the years there have been U.S. Foreign Service officers who undergo extensive language training in preparation for service in Japan.

Putting in the effort necessary to learn Japanese does not necessarily make people admire everything about Japan's culture, economy, or political system. But as a general rule, people who have invested years in learning the language and living in Japan quite understandably begin to see things Japan's way. Those who first saw Japan in the 1950s and early 1960s often have a tenderhearted view. To them, Japan will always be a small, impoverished,

hardworking, and long-suffering nation, building its way up from nothing, which needs the understanding and protection of its big Uncle Sam as it continues to mature. The real Japan, of course, no longer much resembles the delicate bud of earlier years, but the old memories are strong.

The Japan specialists in the U.S. Foreign Service have particularly compelling reasons to feel protective of Japan. Within the State Department, Japan is a somewhat limiting career focus. If you choose it, you're left out of the great game of U.S.-Soviet relations (much as Japan itself is), and there is only one embassy, in Tokyo,



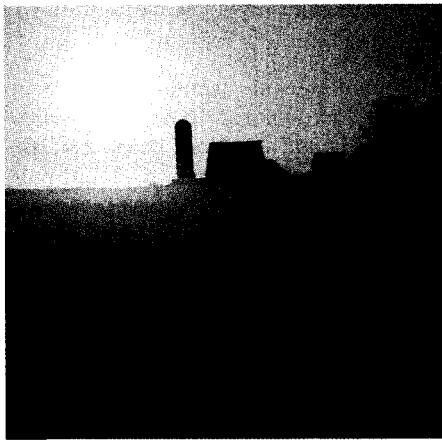
that's really satisfying as an overseas assignment. (Since the ambassadors to Tokyo are almost always political appointees, there are only two big jobs that career Japan hands can shoot for: chief of the Japan desk in the State Department and deputy chief of mission in Tokyo.) But within their own world America's Japan specialists have tremendous influence, which they generally use to keep the relationship strong.

When they're serving in Japan, the Japan hands are very well treated. They mix with Japanese diplomats and politicians, who are polished, cosmopolitan, and instinctively pro-American, in the sense that they are always trying to minimize frictions between

the countries. The Japanese Foreign Ministry's "America-handlers" have spent years studying and working in America (the current director of the Foreign Ministry's North American division is an alumnus of St. Paul's School, Harvard College, and a Harvard graduate school), and many of them retain a respectful Eisenhower- or Kennedy-era view of America as Japan's usually magnanimous elder brother. American diplomats understandably enjoy dealing with such people in Tokyo—and when they are posted back to Washington they suddenly spend much of their time "taking it on the chin from anti-Japanese yahoos in the Congress," as Frank Gibney has put it. The virtues of Japan—its safety and harmony, the near-universal competence with which people go about their work—are never so apparent as when you're someplace else. After three or four years in Tokyo, an American diplomat comes back to Washington to cope with snarling taxi drivers and sales clerks who can't add. He is a minor part of the Washington bureaucracy again, not the respected figure he was in Tokyo. Everything in his life experience makes him think more kindly of Japan than some American manufacturer who is trying to sell there does. He knows enough about Japan to respond "Yes, but . . ." when American laymen make half-informed comments to him, and when he hears Americans rant about Japanese protectionism or xenophobia he knows that anything wrong with Japan today was more wrong twenty years ago. As a result, the Americans with the main responsibility for running U.S.-Japanese diplomatic relations have a natural bias against spoiling the relationship with tedious complaints about trade.

Although he was neither a career diplomat nor a specialist on Japan, Mike Mansfield, who retired last January after nearly twelve years as the U.S. ambassador to Japan, was the best-known member of the Japan club. During his time in Tokyo he presided over an increasingly divided embassy staff, whose conflicts revealed the tension between the traditional cadre of Japan specialists and newer groups urging more aggressive criticism of Japanese trading practices.

Mansfield, who was eighty-five years old by the time he retired, was absolutely beloved in Japan. The edi-



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torials and speeches about his years in Tokyo were more unequivocally positive than those about Emperor Hirohito's reign, and almost as heartfelt. For his part, Mansfield was an unfailing supporter of Japan and the relationship. In virtually every speech and interview he gave as ambassador, Mansfield stressed that the United States and Japan were partners in "the most important bilateral relationship in the world, bar none."

One part of the embassy staff agreed wholeheartedly with Mansfield—and with the Japanese assessment that he was the wisest and most constructive American ambassador that Japan had ever had. But another part held a distinctly different view: that Mansfield had become an extra Japanese ambassador to the United States, turning the embassy into a good-news machine about the relationship even when more skepticism about Japanese trade patterns would have been warranted.

At least during the three years I have seen it in operation, the embassy has seemed deeply split between the hard-

line and soft-line factions. There will always be disputes about U.S. policy toward Japan, of course, because of the tension between commercial and political interests. But in the past few years these have become a kind of war, fought the way bureaucratic wars are—through promotion decisions, control of memos and cables, leaks to the press.

Like most struggles within the government, those in the Tokyo embassy concern bureaucratic details as well as large issues of policy. Should the senior Commerce Department official in the embassy be a "minister-counselor," the highest rank after ambassador and deputy chief of mission, or a mere "counselor," implying less emphasis on commercial concerns? Despite Mansfield's opposition, last year Congress ordered that the commercial (and later the agricultural) counselors in several major posts, including Tokyo, be upgraded to minister-counselors. Mansfield got the State Department's approval to upgrade the political counselor to a minister-counselor too, to indicate that overall policy toward Japan had not

changed and, not incidentally, that State had lost no bureaucratic ground to Commerce. In his speeches Mansfield recommended a free-trade zone between Japan and the United States as the ultimate solution to niggling trade problems. Commerce officials said that the idea would never work, because of the way it was being interpreted by the Japanese. (Most Japanese officials see the free-trade zone as a way to eliminate formal trade barriers, like tariffs, which are actually higher in the United States than in Japan—without doing anything about the informal cartel-like barriers that are common in Japan.) During the negotiations to open the Japanese beef and citrus markets, the Commerce hardliners sent cables to Washington day after day urging that further pressure be brought to bear on the Japanese. The soft-liners said, on the contrary, that there was no more give on Japan's side, and that the harder the United States pushed, the more resistance it would meet. (In this negotiation the soft-liners turned out to be wrong.) In

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Northern helmeted curassow

ENVIRONMENT

Saving the Cracids

For many of these birds private zoos may be the only hope

ROBERTO AZEREDO lovingly cradles a huge egg in his hands as though it had been designed by Peter Carl Fabergé. He brushes it against his cheek. He holds it to his ear. He raises it to the light. "This one," he declares, "is going to hatch tonight."

"You see?" says his friend James Gomes Simpson. "That's why I tell him he's the crazy man here. He can look a bird in the eye and know she's going to lay an egg that day, or feel an egg and know it's going to hatch that night."

The bird that will peck out of its shell a few hours later, true to Azeredo's prediction, is a red-billed curassow, or *Crax blumenbachii*, one of the largest, loveliest, and most peculiar birds of Latin America. An adult male of the species weighs about eight pounds and has a neck the length of a goose's, a vanilla belly, a black Mohawk crest, and a bluish-black back and wings. Around the base of and extending below its beak is a bright-red knob of soft cuticle that resembles a

chewing-gum bubble. A startled red-billed curassow emits a musical whistle four seconds long, which sounds like a bomb dropping (without the explosion). A male in search of a mate produces a breathy boom, as if it were blowing air across a very large bottle.

Roberto Azeredo owns about 220 booming, whistling *Crax blumenbachii* in his personal zoo outside Belo Horizonte, 200 miles from Rio de Janeiro. This number may well exceed the number of red-billed curassows in the forests of South America, the bird's native home. *Crax blumenbachii* is one of the most endangered species in one of the most endangered families of birds in the world: the cracid family, a group of forty-nine species distantly related to pheasants and quail. Azeredo is not an ecologist or an ornithologist; he's a textile specialist in Brazil's Ministry of Development. Breeding birds, he says, is just his "heavy hobby." Yet Stuart Strahl, a biologist with Wildlife Conservation International, the research division of the New York Zoological Society, believes that Azeredo is one of the red-billed curassow's only chances for survival. He hopes that Azeredo and other well-heeled Latin Americans who are passionate collectors of endangered animals can be rallied to the often frustrating task of rescuing tropical forests and the diverse fauna within them.

In last summer's blistering heat and drought North Americans awoke to the

threat of the greenhouse effect, in which gases build up in the atmosphere and trap the sun's heat. Carbon dioxide, the principal offender, is produced not only by the burning of fossil fuels but also by the burning of forests. The statistics demand attention. By conservative estimates, at least 27,000 square miles of tropical forest worldwide are destroyed each year—much of it burned to clear the land for agricultural use. As much as 38,000 square miles more may be grossly disrupted. If the destruction continues at this rate, the planet's rain forests will have essentially disappeared by about the year 2135. As they vanish, global temperatures may well rise to potentially catastrophic levels, although scientists disagree on the extent of the greenhouse threat. More certain is that with the forests will go a huge slice of life. Rain forests cover only seven percent of the earth's land surface, but they contain more than half the plant and animal species—the vast majority of which scientists have yet to name and study. According to Robert Peters, of the World Wildlife Fund, tens of thousands of species are lost every year as a result of deforestation.

Big problems would seem to require big, desperate solutions, and some conservationists and biologists do advocate a broad-stroke approach. Thomas Lovejoy, of the Smithsonian Institution, for example, is lobbying for a global survey to identify areas rich in biological diversity and then for a plan to set those areas aside as reserves. "In my opinion, we've got ten years left," he says. "We've got ten years to turn this destruction around, and that means making substantial changes quickly." Ultimately, however, even global solutions require local applications—and conservation becomes fascinating in its particulars. For the scientists who live and work in countries where the rain forests are found, the art of transforming conservation theory into practice demands suppleness, imagination, and a taste for the unorthodox; sometimes the work they do barely resembles conservation as it is taught in school.

IN HIS BID TO save cracids, Stuart Strahl says, he will do "just about anything." Beyond conventional efforts to educate the public about threats to the world's wildlife, he works



1987, before the FSX fighter plane became a household word, U.S. negotiators urged Japan simply to buy the American F-16 fighter—or, if Japan developed a new fighter that refined the F-16's technology, to share the resulting innovations with the United States. "Most interesting was the position of the State Department and of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo," Clyde Prestowitz writes in *Trading Places*. "Cables suggesting opposition to the Japanese proposals were altered or not sent by top embassy officials."

One famous struggle involved the brief Tokyo career of a man named Michael Ely. Ely, an experienced economist who had specialized in European affairs, was brought to the Tokyo embassy in 1985 as the minister-counselor for economic affairs. Ely took a man-from-Mars look at Japanese trading practices and agreed with the hard-liners most of the time. This placed him more and more directly at odds with Mansfield and the embassy's political staff. By mid-1987 he was on his way out. He left voluntarily, for a new as-

signment in Brussels that was a genuine promotion. But several of his colleagues said that his eagerness to take the new job demonstrated the strain of the daily in-house battles. "If I sat down with a cable form, I knew from the outset that if I wrote something that cast Japan in a good light, it would just sail through the clearance process," one man who worked in the Tokyo embassy during the Mansfield years told me recently. "If I said, for instance, that Japan's market was rapidly opening to imports, no one would question my sources, the internal coherence of the argument, or where I got my evidence. But if I sat down to write a piece critical of Japan in some way, everything would slow down."

These intramural divisions do make a difference, even in an age when telephones, computers, and fast international travel obviate many of the jobs ambassadors used to perform. The embassy in Tokyo is one of the two or three most important U.S. embassies anywhere. Critical U.S.-Japanese negotiations are usually conducted in To-

kio rather than in Washington (because the United States is usually asking Japan to change some policy), and the embassy is the working base and information source for the American team. The split inside the embassy is probably also an indication of what will happen to broader U.S. opinion about Japan. The traditional Japan-handlers, presided over by Mansfield, were determined to head off Japan-bashing in the United States—but this led them to play down the significance of trade problems that would inevitably re-emerge. Mansfield himself often said that the trade imbalance between Japan and the United States was all America's fault—an arguable point, perhaps, but a strange one for a U.S. ambassador to make.

This spring Mansfield was replaced by Michael Armacost, who started off with a more balanced mixture of soft-line and hard-line signals to the Japanese. But the cleavages among America's Japan-handlers remain, and they will affect our policy for a long time.

—James Fallows

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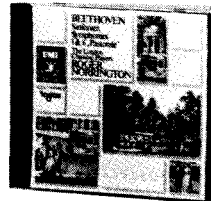
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(Pro Arte) 357871

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Davis, Toronto Sym. (Angel)
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Phil. (Angel) 355172

Stravinsky: The Firebird;
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(Varese Sarab.) 346809

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Yo-Yo Ma; Maazel, Cond.
(CBS Master) 348458

Dvorak—New World
Symph. Batiz, London Phil.
(Varese Sarab.) 346809

Bransford Marsalis—
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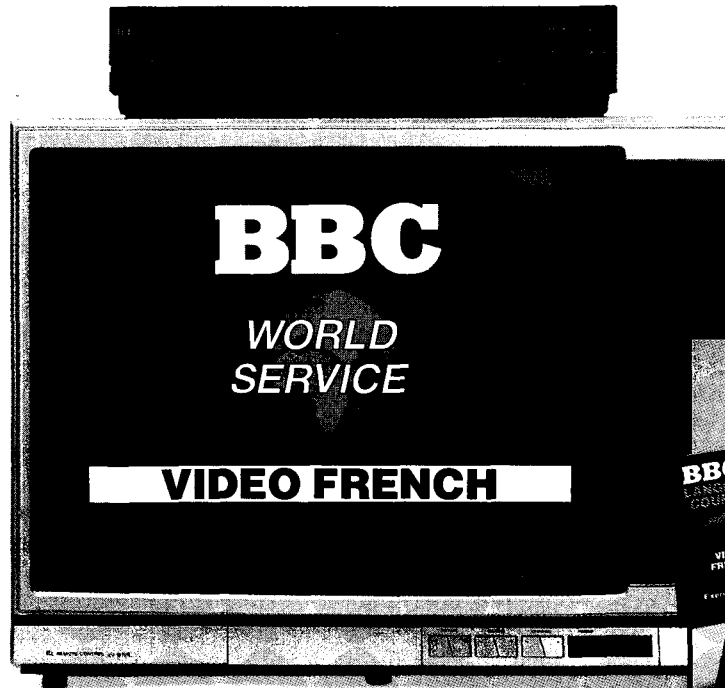
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with people who would rather see cracids in stewpots or cages than fluttering freely through the tropics. Whenever possible he puts a price tag on the endangered birds. "In Latin America a lot of people still think of conservation as an elitist luxury," says Strahl, who has lived in Venezuela for four years. "That's starting to change, but I still have to watch what I do so I'm not perceived as a gringo imperialist."

Strahl saw in cracids the chance to get "the biggest bang for a conservation buck." The birds are found as far north as the southern tip of Texas and as far south as Uruguay and upper Argentina, in habitats ranging from the equatorial rain forests of Amazonia to cooler mountain cloud forests and the scrubby seasonal vegetation of *tepui*, or buttes. Despite this wide distribution, almost 40 percent of all cracid species are close to extinction, and for the same reasons.

Most cracids seem to be picky nesters, reproducing only in undisturbed primary forest—the type of forest that is being decimated at such a breathless clip. What's more, because they're big and meaty, cracids have long been the most hunted bird group in Latin America. Many Indians and peasants rely on cracids as one of their major sources of protein; sport and commercial hunters also shoot the creatures, usually illegally. "The fatal handicap of the cracids is their legendary tastiness," says George Glenn, the executive director of the Rare Center for Tropical Bird Conservation, in Philadelphia. (Both Glenn and Strahl say they have never eaten cracid meat, but one Venezuelan biologist who has confirms that "it's delicious—much, much better than chicken.")

These combined threats lend the birds an economic significance, which Strahl emphasizes in promoting cracid conservation. He doesn't say, Save the birds because they're beautiful and they deserve to live. Instead, he argues that the population should be maintained for those people who have no alternative source of meat. Noting the birds' need for primary habitat, he presents the cracid family as a powerful tool for tracking the health of a forest. In the jargon of ecologists, they're an ideal "indicator species": a decline in cracid numbers is among the first signs that a forest, no matter how pristine its

appearance, is threatened—by illegal lumbering, excessive hunting, toxic runoff from agriculture, or other kinds of human intervention. Conversely, when life is good for cracids, it's generally safe for an entire tropical ecosystem of smaller and less flamboyant organisms.

"Most Latin governments are beginning to recognize the value in managing forests," Strahl says. "For one thing, they're beginning to feel a lot of pressure from the international community to slow down on deforestation to prevent global warming. Second, the governments here realize that if you lose your forest, you lose your watershed. And if you lose your watershed, you lose your agricultural areas, your drinking water, and your power source. Forests are good for watersheds, because they trap more water in the soil, and they produce more rainfall. As the wind goes over the surface of a forest, it picks up moisture and heat, clouds form, and you get big thunderstorms by the afternoon. That's the traditional tropical-rain-forest pattern, and its value as a natural resource is becoming clear.

"What the governments don't have is a good system for monitoring their parks. So that's where cracids come in. The birds are large, they can be counted, and the figures can be compared with base-line data to tell you how a particular forest is faring. I see them as the bird group that best reflects conservation problems in Latin America—and that best presents conservation solutions. Using cracids as an indicator species is the biggest selling point of my program."

Getting the base-line data on cracids, however, has been no easy task. As important as the birds are to Latin America, they've been virtually ignored by biologists from developed countries. "If I mention curassow to some ornithologists in the States, they'll say, 'Isn't that a liqueur?' or 'Isn't that an island in the Caribbean?'" Strahl complains.

To study most cracid species means spending hours slogging through hip-deep mud or crawling beneath dense thicket; it means submitting mutely to the relentless attentions of mosquitoes, ticks, mites, and microorganisms that have yet to be named—all for a glimpse of a single cracid that may last for, oh, 7.6 seconds. The sight may be

gorgeous and magical, but it comes at a price too dear for U.S. researchers: fewer than twenty references to cracids can be found in the past decade's worth of ornithological literature. And until recently virtually none of the Latin American universities offered advanced degrees in ecology or zoology, which meant that few people who had a personal stake in tropical biology were able to pursue it.

"We don't have many older biologists here in Venezuela," says Israel Niño, an ecology student at Central University, in Caracas. "We don't have a long history of biological research. It's up to us young biologists to learn about the types of fauna that live in our forests."

STRAHL HAS BEEN WORKING to change the sorry state of cracid research by obtaining grants and fellowships for native South Americans, and he hopes to see about a dozen of his Venezuelan students earn their master's degrees or Ph.D.s over the next several years. But to gather the bird data he needed immediately, Strahl and a young Venezuelan colleague, José Silva, turned to the people who know the most about cracid distribution and cracid habits: hunters.

Because so much hunting is done illegally, no one was keeping records on who was killing which birds where—nor were hunters likely to confess in order to let records be kept. Strahl and Silva were forced to employ a ruse. Pretending to be a private bird breeder in quest of information, Silva spent three and a half years traveling to towns and hamlets throughout Venezuela. He'd go to the village center—"Every town in Venezuela has a Plaza Bolívar," he says—and ask the old men sitting there whether they knew who in the area hunted cracids (which are called by such local names as *pava*, *pauji*, and *camata*). They'd introduce Silva to the local hunters, who would be seduced by his friendliness into revealing all that they knew and did: how many birds were in the area, how many they shot each week.

"I'd say, Please, you must help me. I want to breed cracids, so you must tell me the truth about these birds," Silva says. "I got lucky. In ninety-nine percent of the three hundred and ten interviews I did, they told me everything



I wanted to know." Sometimes the hunters shared tales of how difficult it was to catch a bird. Others vividly described cracid behavior. "One guy told me how he saw two northern helmeted curassows, the *Pauxi pauxi*"—a highly endangered species—"in their courtship behavior. That's very important. We don't know much about *pauxi*. He told me about how the male bird got close to the female, how it walked around her, making the courtship noises. But he never saw the copulation. He shot them first—male and female both." Only once was a hunter suspicious enough of Silva's motives to threaten his life.

From Silva's investigative reporting, Strahl's own field research, and other accounts, Strahl and Silva pieced together a portrait of cracid-killing in Venezuela. They discovered that most hunting in the northern half of the country is recreational, while in the south hunting is largely for purposes of subsistence: people shoot cracids, sometimes daily, to survive. Strahl seized the chance to put that pattern to use. He devised a novel plan for saving a large expanse of primary woodland, which he thinks will serve as a model for other tropical forests.

VENEZUELA HAS ONLY a tenth as much rain forest as Brazil does, but its overall conservation record is far better than that of its huge neighbor (and, in fact, better than that of three quarters of the rest of the continent): about 30 percent of Venezuela's wilderness has been declared either national parkland or protected areas. Venezuela also has an official Ministry of the Environment; in Colombia and Ecuador, in contrast, conservation decisions are made by the Ministry of Agriculture. Nevertheless, many of Venezuela's protected areas are protected on paper only; no effective controls exist over lumbering, hunting, and mining within their borders. Guards who are supposed to monitor park use sometimes have other, higher-paying jobs during the day. "In some areas three out of four guard stations are deserted," Strahl says. "If you go in with a chainsaw or a shotgun, nobody is about to stop you." In effect, there exist few areas within Venezuela that are protected as thoroughly as, say, Yosemite, where resource exploitation is strictly forbidden; Strahl wanted to

help establish such an area. Realizing that the government was unlikely to pay for a phalanx of full-time guards, Strahl and Venezuelan co-workers found a way to police the area from within.

As their candidate for protection, they targeted a 1,544-square-mile parcel of forest reserve in south-central Venezuela, where a major river, the Rio Caura, branches off into the smaller Rio Nichare. The forest surrounding the Nichare is among the lushest and most biologically varied in the nation, encompassing lowland tropic, cloud forest, and *tepui* habitats. Seven species of cracid live in the region, along with 400 other species of birds; tapirs, jaguars, and ocelots; six types of primates; and an uncounted multitude of plants and insects. Scattered throughout the rough, steep terrain are settlements of Makiritare and Sanema Indians, who subsist by fishing and hunting—mainly cracids. What's especially important about this swatch of forest is that it is almost completely inaccessible from most directions. The only feasible way to enter is at the mouth of the Nichare, which is barely wider than a standard house.

Strahl and his Venezuelan associates have asked the local Indians to monitor the mouth of the Nichare, keeping out commercial hunters and miners. Although the Indians live south of the river gateway, they have set up an outpost at that vulnerable spot. Lately the area has come under increasing pressure from entrepreneurial gold-diggers, drawn by rumors that southern Venezuela may contain up to a tenth of the world's gold supply; the Indians are worried that their hunting grounds will be destroyed in a frenzied gold rush. Strahl and his colleagues are optimistic that the government will set aside the Nichare site as the country's first protected area for which local Indians will be the designated overseers. The Indians would be able to hunt and fish as they always have. Strahl asks only that a small subdivision of the reserve—about 200 square miles—be left alone as a scientific study site, where biologists can, for instance, obtain base-line data on wildlife populations. As a final spur, the Indians will receive a grant to supply them with much-needed medicine, outboard motors, radios, and other goods.

A few of the Sanema Indians were

deeply suspicious of Strahl, claiming that he would turn the Nichare basin into his personal hunting ground. But several Makiritare families have already moved to the river's mouth to stand guard. Strahl says, "I don't think another site in Venezuela has such a diversity of life, and can so easily be protected." For all its romantic simplicity, the plan is not perfect. Years ago the Indians traded their traditional blowguns for rifles, and they now bag many more cracids than they once did. "But the alternative is worse," Strahl says. "The alternative is to risk losing the whole forest, along with every last cracid and the entire forest ecosystem. I wish they didn't kill the birds, but I know that they have to eat."

WHETHER THE NICHARE site will stay protected over generations, and whether other forests in other nations can be similarly set aside for small-scale use, remain to be seen. In the meantime, Strahl is struggling to keep alive as many cracid species as possible. Several species have not been spotted in nature for decades. Many of the most endangered varieties are in the hands of people Strahl alternately respects and distrusts: private bird breeders.

The serious cracid breeders of Latin America are an unusual and insular group of about a dozen men who all know one another—and one another's collections. Most prominent among them is Jesús Estudillo, a wealthy veterinarian and poultry producer in Mexico City who has a fifteen-acre aviary of a thousand or so cracids. He owns representatives of almost the entire cracid family, including the rare and spectacular horned guan (*Oreophaps derbianus*), which has such an elongated knob of cuticle projecting from its forehead that it looks like a unicorn. But Estudillo does not possess the even rarer alagoas razor-billed curassow (*Mitu mitu mitu*), described in a 1973 book as "possibly extinct." Only Pedro Nardelli, a beer distributor and soft-drink bottler in Rio de Janeiro, has a few *mitus*, in his collection of 350 to 400 birds.

The motives of cracid breeders are not always clear. The men obviously love their birds. Roberto Azeredo spends every morning before work, every lunch hour, every evening, every weekend, and all his vacation time



working with his curassows. Nardelli's son, Pedro Jr., says that when a bird in his father's collection dies, "he is depressed for days; it's as though he'd lost one of his children." The breeders lavish sizable sums of money on their animals. Nardelli paid \$20,000 to cover his 1,000-square-yard zoo with an aluminum net twelve yards high, and he now allows his commoner species to fly around freely. Estudillo hired a landscaper to design elaborate planters for his cracid cages. On occasion the breeders have rescued animals from probable extermination: Nardelli captured what may be the last group of *Mitu mitu mitu* from a forest that was being razed to make way for a sugarcane field.

Yet part of the delight the birdmen take in their flocks has less to do with conservation than it does with simple pride. "In a way, it's like stamp or coin collecting," Strahl says. "Who has the biggest and most valuable collection? Who has the rarest birds? For Nardelli, owning the only *Mitu mitu mitu* is like having an original Rembrandt." Trafficking in endangered animals is illegal in many Latin American countries, so some of the breeders are vague about how they obtained their birds. "Some we found ourselves, on expeditions," Nardelli says. "Others were . . . gifts."

Strahl first realized the difficulties of working with private breeders when he organized a cracid symposium in Caracas in the spring of last year. More than 220 people attended the meeting, which made it the largest avian-conservation conference ever held in Latin America; but among the participants were a number of cracid collectors who tried to use the event to barter birds. "They knew they couldn't sell the birds legally," Strahl says. "But once the breeders were all in one place at one time, we had no way of stopping any shady dealings that might go on." Strahl later learned that one collector at the meeting was hawking a pair of highly endangered *Crax alberti* for \$25,000. A few breeders tried to sell Strahl birds, while others sought his advice for tapping the lucrative zoo and pet markets in the United States. "I'm a field biologist," he told them. "I don't trade birds." Strahl was also distressed by the frivolity of some of the breeders. "One fellow showed me photos of a bird that he'd gotten by

crossing two endangered species," Strahl recalls. "He'd done that because he'd liked the colors of the original birds, and he thought the offspring would be cute. And the hybrid was a very beautiful bird. But it bothered me to see these vanishing species being used like colors in a paint set."

At the same time, Strahl recognized the value of trying to woo collectors over to his cause. "They have this incredible gene bank out there," he says. "For some species of cracids, captive breeding is the only chance we have." Visiting the breeders' facilities, Strahl has often been impressed. Roberto Azeredo, for example, has become a high priest of cracid fertility. In the wild, *Crax blumenbachii* lay only two eggs a year at best. Under Azeredo's pampering care, many of the curassows are pumping out three eggs five times each year. Indeed, his cages have become so crowded, he says, that "we have a hard time believing the bird is endangered."

Now Strahl, with the help of Geer Scheres, a biologist in Belgium, is attempting to establish a private breeders' network. Strahl wants the collectors to exchange birds selectively to prevent prolonged inbreeding. Arranging trades can be difficult, because the breeders don't always like each other. Still, Strahl is hopeful he'll be able to foster cooperation.

Recently Estudillo learned of a pair of horned guans that were being kept in a small Guatemalan zoo under atrocious conditions—feeding on stale tortillas and garbage and roaming through a pigs' trough. Estudillo needed the guans to replenish his own population, which has become so inbred that chicks are being born without eyes or legs. After prolonged haggling, Estudillo and Strahl thought they had persuaded the zoo to send the guans to Estudillo—only to have the zoo officials renege on the deal at the last minute. "The Guatemalans are reluctant because horned guans are a prestige item," Strahl says. "But it's possible that the birds could die if we don't get them into an established breeding program."

STRAHL'S LONG-RANGE goal is to see the cracids now in captivity reintroduced into nature. That scheme, too, will take time and diplomacy. Although the birds are reproduc-

ing rapidly in cages, a viable wild population will require thousands of genetically diverse birds. Moreover, if a flock of cracids were released into an unguarded forest, poachers would very likely shoot them, thereby destroying in months what a breeder had taken years to accomplish. Finally, not all the breeders are interested in reintroduction programs. "I'm not sure that some breeders will ever release their surplus birds," Strahl says. "They love them too much."

A test case should come sometime late this year. Roberto Azeredo plans to donate a dozen red-billed curassows to the Companhia Vale Rio Doce, which maintains a protected reserve of primary forest along the Atlantic coast of Brazil. The birds will be kept in cages on the site, and their chicks will be tagged with radio transmitters and released. If the radiotelemetry data reveal that the cracids are thriving, more will be freed. And if the project is successful, similar reintroduction programs will be launched elsewhere in Brazil and in Peru.

"When I talked to Roberto at the [cracid] meeting, I didn't know if he was serious about conservation work—I wondered if he just wanted to sell birds," Strahl says. "But now I'm convinced that his may be one of the best captive-breeding programs of all."

Like most conservationists, Strahl is warily optimistic. "You don't really have a choice about being optimistic," Thomas Lovejoy says. "If you decide that it's too late, that it's hopeless, you'll have a self-fulfilling prophecy on your hands." But Strahl admits that many cracids aren't going to survive to the twenty-first century.

"We conservationists have a dirty little secret," he says. "We don't talk about it publicly, but we know that many species are probably going to go extinct in the next couple of decades. Cracids are going faster than most. *Mitu mitu mitu* isn't going to make it, except under Nardelli's personal care. *Crax blumenbachii* may or may not make it. So sometimes I wonder if our efforts are worthwhile. But then I go out in the field, into the cloud forest, and hear a curassow booming. You feel the boom with your entire body. As long as you can feel the forest, you have a fighting chance."

—Natalie Angier

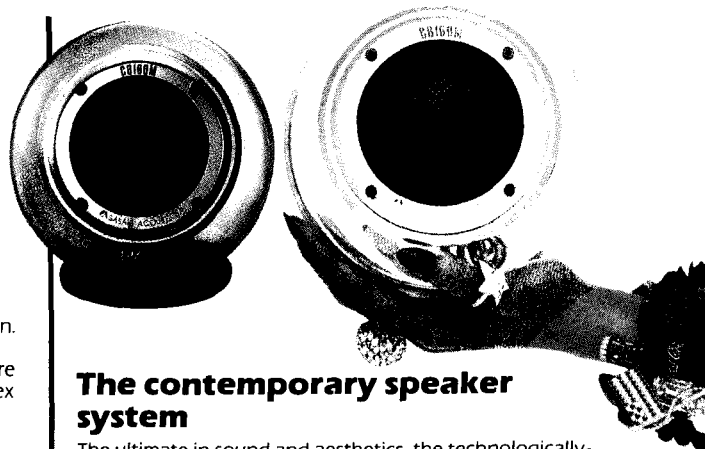
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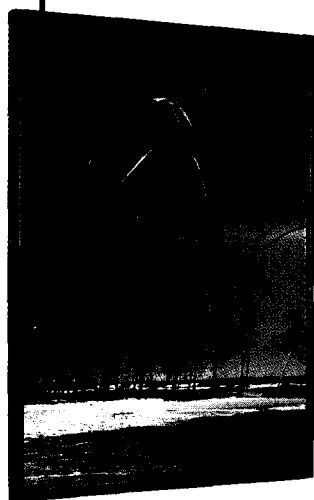
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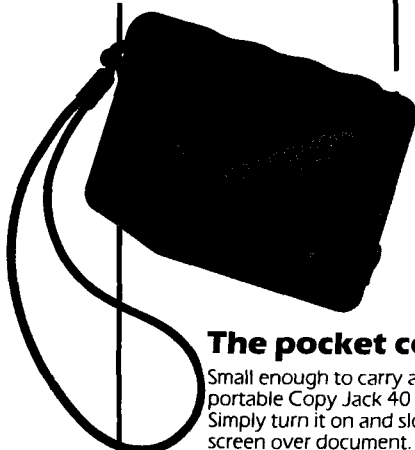
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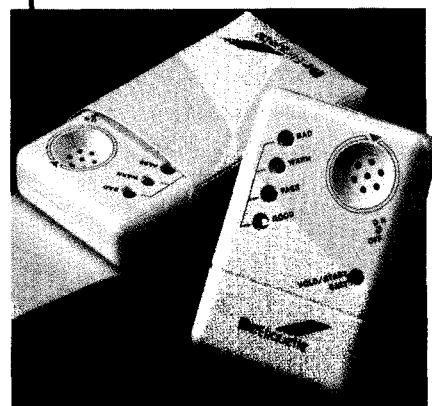
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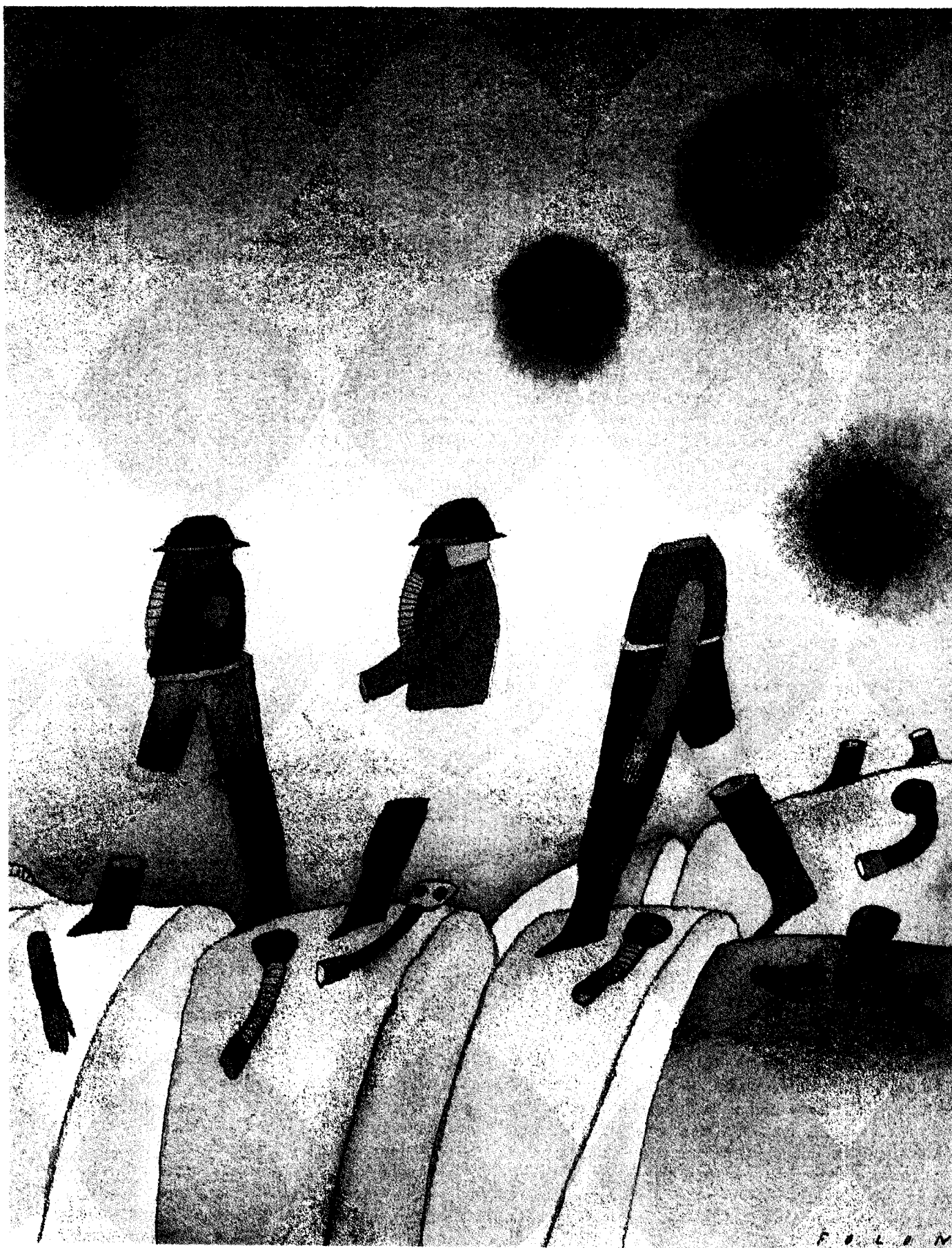
THE REAL WAR 1939–1945

On its fiftieth anniversary, how should we think of the Second World War? What is its contemporary meaning? One possible meaning, reflected in every line of what follows, is obscured by that oddly minimizing term “conventional war.” With our fears focused on nuclear destruction, we tend to be less mindful of just what conventional war between modern industrial powers is like. This article describes such war, in a stark, unromantic manner

BY PAUL FUSSELL

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THE SECOND WORLD War that moved the troops to constant verbal subversion and contempt? What was it that made the Americans, especially, so fertile with insult and cynicism, calling women Marines BAMS (broad-assed Marines) and devising SNAFU, with its offspring TARFU (“Things are really fucked up”), FUBAR (“Fucked up beyond all recognition”), and the perhaps less satisfying FUBB (“Fucked up beyond belief”)? It was not just the danger and fear, the boredom and uncertainty and loneliness and deprivation. It was the conviction that optimistic publicity and euphemism had rendered their experience so falsely that it would never be readily communicable. They knew that in its representation to the laity, what was happening to them was systematically sanitized and Norman Rockwellized, not to mention Disneyfied. They knew that despite the advertising and publicity, where it counted their arms and equipment were worse than the Germans’. They knew that their automatic rifles





(First World War vintage) were slower and clumsier, and they knew that the Germans had a much better light machine gun. They knew, despite official assertions to the contrary, that the Germans had real smokeless powder for their small arms and that they did not. They knew that their own tanks, both American and British, were ridiculously underarmed and underarmored, so that they would inevitably be destroyed in an open encounter with an equal number of German panzers. They knew that the anti-tank mines supplied to them became unstable in subfreezing weather, and that truckloads of them blew up in the winter of 1944–1945. And they knew that the single greatest weapon of the war, the atomic bomb excepted, was the German 88-mm flat-trajectory gun, which brought down thousands of bombers and tens of thousands of soldiers. The Allies had nothing as good, despite the fact that one of them had designated itself the world's greatest industrial power. The troops' disillusion and their ironic response, in song and satire and sullen contempt, came from knowing that the home front then could (and very likely historiography later would) be aware of none of these things.

The Great War brought forth the stark, depressing *Journey's End*; the Second, as John Ellis notes in *The Sharp End*, the tuneful *South Pacific*. The real war was tragic and ironic beyond the power of any literary or philosophic analysis to suggest, but in unbombed America especially, the meaning of the war seemed inaccessible. Thus, as experience, the suffering was wasted. The same tricks of publicity and advertising might have succeeded in sweetening the actualities of Vietnam if television and a vigorous, uncensored, moral journalism hadn't been brought to bear. Because the Second World War was fought against palpable evil, and thus was a sort of moral triumph, we have been reluctant to probe very deeply into its murderous requirements. America has not yet understood what the war was like and thus has been unable to use such understanding to reinterpret and redefine the national reality and to arrive at something like public maturity.

"Members Missing"

IN THE POPULAR AND GENTEEL ICONOGRAPHY OF war during the bourgeois age, all the way from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history paintings to twentieth-century photographs, the bodies of the dead are intact, if inert—sometimes bloody and sprawled in awkward positions, but, except for the absence of life, plausible and acceptable simulacra of the people they once were. But there is a contrary and much more "realistic" convention represented in, say, the Bayeux tapestry, whose ornamental border displays numerous severed heads and limbs. That convention is honored likewise in the Renaissance awareness of what happens to the body in battle. In Shakespeare's *Henry V*

the soldier Michael Williams assumes the traditional understanding when he observes,

But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and arms and heads chopped off in a battle shall join together at the latter day, and cry all, 'We died at such a place'—some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left.

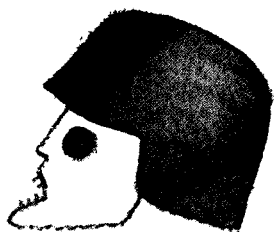
And Goya's eighty etchings known as *The Disasters of War*, depicting events during the Peninsular War, feature plentiful dismembered and beheaded cadavers. One of the best-known of Goya's images is that of a naked body, its right arm severed, impaled on a tree.

But these examples date from well before the modern age of publicity and euphemism. The peruser (*reader* would be the wrong word) of the picture collection *Life Goes to War* (1977), a volume so popular and widely distributed as to constitute virtually a definitive and official anthology of Second World War photographs, will find even in its starkest images no depiction of bodies dismembered. There are three separated heads shown, but all, significantly, are Asian—one the head of a Chinese soldier hacked off by the Japanese at Nanking; one a Japanese soldier's badly burnt head (complete with helmet), mounted as a trophy on an American tank at Guadalcanal; and one a former Japanese head, now a skull sent home as a souvenir to a girlfriend by her navy beau in the Pacific. No American dismemberings were registered, even in the photographs of Tarawa and Iwo Jima. American bodies (decently clothed) are occasionally in evidence, but they are notably intact. The same is true in other popular collections of photographs, like *Collier's Photographic History of World War II*, Ronald Heiferman's *World War II*, A.J.P. Taylor's *History of World War II*, and Charles Herridge's *Pictorial History of World War II*. In these, no matter how severely wounded, Allied soldiers are never shown suffering what in the Vietnam War was termed traumatic amputation: everyone has all his limbs, his hands and feet and digits, not to mention an expression of courage and cheer. And recalling Shakespeare and Goya, it would be a mistake to assume that dismembering was more common when warfare was largely a matter of cutting weapons, like swords and sabers. Their results are nothing compared with the work of bombs, machine guns, pieces of shell, and high explosives in general. The difference between the two traditions of representation is not a difference in military technique. It is a difference in sensibility, especially in the ability of a pap-fed public to face unpleasant facts, like the actualities apparent at the site of a major airplane accident.

What annoyed the troops and augmented their sardonic, contemptuous attitude toward those who viewed them from afar was in large part this public innocence about the bizarre damage suffered by the human body in

modern war. The troops could not contemplate without anger the lack of public knowledge of the Graves Registration form used by the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps, with its space for indicating "Members Missing." You would expect frontline soldiers to be struck and hurt by bullets and shell fragments, but such is the popular insulation from the facts that you would not expect them to be hurt, sometimes killed, by being struck by parts of their friends' bodies violently detached. If you asked a wounded soldier or Marine what hit him, you'd hardly be ready for the answer "My buddy's head," or his sergeant's heel or his hand, or a Japanese leg, complete with shoe and puttees, or the West Point ring on his captain's severed hand. What drove the troops to fury was the complacent, unimaginative innocence of their home fronts and rear echelons about such an experience as the following, repeated in essence tens of thousands of times. Captain Peter Royle, a British artillery forward observer, was moving up a hill in a night attack in North Africa. "I was following about twenty paces behind," he wrote in a memoir,

In the face of such horror, the distinction between friend and enemy vanishes, and the violent dismemberment of any human being becomes traumatic. After the disastrous Canadian raid at Dieppe, German soldiers observed: "The dead on the beach—I've never seen such obscenities before." "There were pieces of human beings littering the beach. There were headless bodies, there were legs, there were arms." There were even shoes "with feet in them." The soldiers on one side know what the soldiers on the other side understand about dismemberment and evisceration, even if that knowledge is hardly shared by the civilians behind them. Hence the practice among German U-boats of carrying plenty of animal intestines to shoot to the surface to deceive those imagining that their depth charges have done the job. Some U-boats, it was said, carried (in cold storage) severed legs and arms to add verisimilitude. But among the thousands of published photographs of sailors and submariners being rescued after torpedoings and sinkings, there was no evidence of severed limbs, intestines, or floating parts.



**IF YOU ASKED A WOUNDED SOLDIER OR MARINE
WHAT HIT HIM, YOU'D HARDLY BE READY FOR THE
ANSWER "MY BUDDY'S HEAD," OR HIS SERGEANT'S HEEL
OR HIS HAND, OR A JAPANESE LEG.**

when there was a blinding flash a few yards in front of me. I had no idea what it was and fell flat on my face. I found out soon enough: a number of the infantry were carrying mines strapped to the small of their backs, and either a rifle or machine gun bullet had struck one, which had exploded, blowing the man into three pieces—two legs and head and chest. His inside was strewn on the hillside and I crawled into it in the darkness.

In war, as in air accidents, insides are much more visible than it is normally well to imagine. And there's an indication of what can be found on the ground after an air crash in one soldier's memories of the morning after an artillery exchange in North Africa. Neil McCallum and his friend "S." came upon the body of a man who had been lying on his back when a shell, landing at his feet, had eviscerated him:

"Good God," said S., shocked, "here's one of his fingers." S. stubbed with his toe at the ground some feet from the corpse. There is more horror in a severed digit than in a man dying: it savors of mutilation. "Christ," went on S. in a very low voice, "look, it's not his finger."

If American stay-at-homes could be almost entirely protected from an awareness of the looks and smells of the real war, the British, at least those living in bombed areas, could not. But even then, as one Briton noted in 1941, "we shall never know half of the history . . . of these times." What prompted that observation was this incident: "The other night not half a mile from me a middle-aged woman [in the civilian defense] went out with an ambulance. In a smashed house she saw something she thought was a mop. It was no mop but a man's head." So unwilling is the imagination to dwell on genuine—as opposed to fictional or theatrical—horrors that, indeed, "we shall never know half of the history . . . of these times." At home under the bombs in April, 1941, Frances Faviell was suddenly aware that the whole house was coming down on top of her, and she worried about "Anne," who was in bed on the top floor.

With great difficulty I raised my head and shook it free of heavy, choking, dusty stuff. An arm had fallen round my neck—a warm, living arm, and for one moment I thought that Richard had entered in the darkness and was holding me, but when very cautiously I raised my hand to it, I found that it was a woman's bare arm with

two rings on the third finger and it stopped short in a sticky mess.

You can't take much of that sort of thing without going mad, as General Sir John Hackett understood when he saw that the wild destruction of enemy human beings had in it less of satisfaction than of distress. Injured and on the German side of the line at Arnhem, he was being taken to the German medical installation. Along the road he saw "half a body, just naked buttocks and the legs joined on and no more of it than that." For those who might have canted that the only good German is a dead German, Hackett has a message: "There was no comfort here. It was like being in a strange and terrible nightmare from which you longed to wake and could not."

The Democracy of Fear

IN THE GREAT WAR WILFRED OWEN WAS DRIVEN VERY near to madness by having to remain for some time next to the scattered body pieces of one of his friends. He had numerous counterparts in the Second World War. At the botched assault on Tarawa Atoll, one coxswain at the helm of a landing vessel went quite mad, perhaps at the shock of steering through all the severed heads and limbs near the shore. One Marine battalion commander, badly wounded, climbed above the rising tide onto a pile of American bodies. Next afternoon he was found there, mad. But madness did not require the spectacle of bodies just like yours messily torn apart. Fear continued over long periods would do the job, as on the merchant and Royal Navy vessels on the Murmansk run, where "grown men went steadily and fixedly insane before each other's eyes," as Tristan Jones testified in *Heart of Oak*. Madness was likewise familiar in submarines, especially during depth-bomb attacks. One U.S. submariner reported that during the first months of the Pacific war such an attack sent three men "stark raving mad": they had to be handcuffed and tied to their bunks. Starvation and thirst among prisoners of the Japanese, and also among downed fliers adrift on rafts, drove many insane, and in addition to drinking their urine they tried to relieve their thirst by biting their comrades' jugular veins and sucking the blood. In one sense, of course, the whole war was mad, and every participant insane from the start, but in a strictly literal sense the result of the years of the bombing of Berlin and its final destruction by the Russian army was, for much of the population, actual madness. Just after the surrender, according to Douglas Botting, in *From the Ruins of the Reich*, some 50,000 orphans could be found living in holes like animals, "some of them one-eyed or one-legged veterans of seven or so, many so deranged by the bombing and the Russian attack that they screamed at the sight of any uniform, even a Salvation Army one."

Although in the Great War madness among the troops

was commonly imputed to the effects of concussion ("shell shock"), in the Second it was more frankly attributed to fear, and in contrast to the expectations of heroic behavior which set the tone of the earlier war, the fact of fear was now squarely to be faced. The result was a whole new literature of fear, implying that terror openly confessed argues no moral disgrace, although failure to control visible symptoms is reprehensible. The official wartime attitude toward the subject was often expressed by quoting Marshal Ney: "The one who says he never knew fear is a compound liar." As the 1943 U.S. *Officer's Guide* goes on to instruct its anxious tyros,

Physical courage is little more than the ability to control the physical fear which all normal men have, and cowardice does not consist in being afraid but in giving away to fear. What, then, keeps the soldier from giving away to fear? The answer is simply—his desire to retain the good opinion of his friends and associates . . . his pride smothers his fear.

The whole trick for the officer is to seem what you would be, and the formula for dealing with fear is ultimately rhetorical and theatrical: regardless of your actual feelings, you must simulate a carriage that will affect your audience as fearless, in the hope that you will be imitated, or at least not be the agent of spreading panic. Advice proffered to enlisted men admitted as frankly that fear was a normal "problem" and suggested ways of controlling it. Some of these are indicated in a wartime publication of the U.S. National Research Council, *Psychology for the Fighting Man*. Even if it is undeniable that in combat everyone will be "scared—terrified," there are some antidotes: keeping extra busy with tasks involving details, and engaging in roll calls and countings-off, to emphasize the proximity of buddies, both as support and as audience. And there is a "command" solution to the fear problem which has been popular among military theorists at least since the Civil War: when under shelling and mortar fire and scared stiff, the infantry should alleviate the problem by moving—never back but forward. This will enable trained personnel to take care of the wounded and will bring troops close enough to the enemy to make him stop the shelling. That it will also bring them close enough to put them within range of rifles and machine guns and hand grenades is what the theorists know but don't mention. The troops know it, which is why they like to move *back*. This upper- or remote-echelon hope that fear can be turned, by argument and reasoning, into something with the appearance of courage illustrates the overlap between the implausible persuasions of advertising and those of modern military motivators.

There was a lot of language devoted to such rationalizing of the irrational. A little booklet issued to infantry replacements joining the Fifth Army in Italy contained tips to ease the entry of innocents into combat: Don't believe all the horror stories circulating in the outfit you're join-

ing. Don't carry too much stuff. Don't excrete in your foxhole—if you can't get out, put some dirt on a shovel, go on that, and throw the load out. Keep your rifle clean and ready. Don't tape down the handles of your grenades for fear of their flying off accidentally—it takes too long to get the tape off. Learn to dig in fast when shelling starts. Watch the ground for evidence of mines and booby traps. On the move, keep contact but don't bunch up. And use common sense in your fight against fear:

Don't be too scared. Everybody is afraid, but you can learn to control your fear. And, as non-coms point out, "you have a good chance of getting through if you don't lose your head. Being too scared is harmful to you." Remember that a lot of noise you hear is ours, and not dangerous. It may surprise you that on the whole, many more are pulled out for sickness or accident than become battle casualties.

(After that bit of persuasion, the presence of first-aid sections on "If You Get Hit" and "If a Buddy Gets Hit" seems a bit awkward.)

This open, practical confrontation of a subject usually unmentioned has its counterpart in the higher reaches of the wartime literature of fear. The theme of Alan Rook's poem "Dunkirk Pier," enunciated in the opening stanza, is one hardly utterable during earlier wars:

Deeply across the waves of our darkness fear
like the silent octopus feeling, groping, clear
as a star's reflection, nervous and cold as a bird,
tells us that pain, tells us that death is near.

William Collins's "Ode to Fear," published in 1746, when the average citizen had his wars fought by others whom he never met, is a remote allegorical and allusive performance lamenting the want of powerful emotion in contemporary poetry. C. Day Lewis's "Ode to Fear" of 1943 is not literary but literal, frank, down-to-earth, appropriately disgusting.

Now fear has come again
To live with us
In poisoned intimacy like pus. . . .

And fear is exhibited very accurately in its physical and psychological symptoms:

The bones, the stalwart spine,
The legs like bastions,
The nerves, the heart's natural combustions,
The head that hives our active thoughts—all pine,
Are quenched or paralyzed
When Fear puts unexpected questions
And makes the heroic body freeze like a beast
surprised.

The new frankness with which fear would be acknowledged in this modernist, secular, psychologically self-conscious wartime was registered in W. H. Auden's "September 1, 1939," in which the speaker, "uncertain and afraid," observes the "waves of anger and fear" washing

over the face of the earth. And the new frankness became the virtual subject and center of *The Age of Anxiety*, which Auden wrote from 1944 to 1946.

Civilian bombing enjoined a new frankness on many Britons. "Perfect fear casteth out love" was Cyril Connolly's travesty of I John 4:18, as if he were thoroughly acquainted with the experience of elbowing his dearest aside at the shelter entrance.

If the anonymous questionnaire, that indispensable mechanism of the social sciences, had been widely used during the Great War, more perhaps could be known or safely conjectured about the actualities of terror on the Western Front. Questionnaires were employed during the Second World War, and American soldiers were asked about the precise physical signs of their fear. The soldiers testified that they were well acquainted with such impediments to stability as (in order of frequency) "Violent pounding of the heart, sinking feeling in the stomach, shaking or trembling all over, feeling sick at the stomach, cold sweat, feeling weak or faint."

More than a quarter of the soldiers in one division admitted that they'd been so scared they'd vomited, and almost a quarter said that at terrifying moments they'd lost control of their bowels. Ten percent had urinated in their pants. As John Ellis observes of these data,

Stereotypes of "manliness" and "guts" can readily accommodate the fact that a man's stomach or heart might betray his nervousness, but they make less allowance for his shitting his pants or wetting himself.

And furthermore, "If over one-fifth of the men in one division actually admitted that they had fouled themselves, it is a fair assumption that many more actually did so." One of the commonest fears, indeed, is that of wetting oneself and betraying one's fear for all to see by the most childish symptom. The fear of this fear augments as the rank rises: for a colonel to wet his pants under shellfire is much worse than for a PFC. The U.S. Marine Eugene B. Sledge confessed that just before he landed at Peleliu, "I felt nauseated and feared that my bladder would surely empty itself and reveal me to be the coward I was."

If perfect fear casteth out love, perfect shame can cast out even agony. During the Normandy invasion a group of American soldiers came upon a paratroop sergeant caught by his chute in a tree. He had broken his leg, and fouled himself as well. He was so ashamed that he begged the soldiers not to come near him, despite his need to be cut down and taken care of. "We just cut off his pants," reported one of the soldiers who found him, "and gently washed him all over, so he wouldn't be humiliated at his next stop."

Men more experienced than that paratrooper had learned to be comfortable with the new frankness. A soldier unused to combat heard his sergeant utter an obscenity when their unit was hit by German 88 fire:

I asked him if he was hit and he sort of smiled and said no, he had just pissed his pants. He always pissed them, he said, just when things started and then he was okay. He wasn't making any apologies either, and then I realized something wasn't quite right with me either. There was something warm down there and it seemed to be running down my leg. . . .

I told the sarge, I said, "Sarge, I've pissed too," or something like that, and he grinned and said, "Welcome to the war."

Other public signs of fear are almost equally common, if even more "comic." One's mouth grows dry and black, and a strange squeaking or quacking comes out, joined sometimes with a stammer. It is very hard for a field-grade officer to keep his dignity when that happens.

For the ground troops, artillery and mortar fire were the most terrifying, partly because their noise was so deafening and unignorable, and partly because the damage they caused the body—sometimes total disappearance or atomization into tiny red bits—was worse than most damage by bullets. To be killed by bullets seemed "so clean and surgical" to Sledge. "But shells would not only tear and rip the body, they tortured one's mind almost beyond the brink of sanity." An occasional reaction to the terror of shelling was audible "confession." One American infantryman cringing under artillery fire in the Ardennes suddenly blurted out to his buddies, "In London I fucked prostitutes and then robbed them of their money." The shelling over, the soldier never mentioned this utterance again, nor did his friends, everyone understanding its stimulus and its meaning.

But for the infantry there was something to be feared almost as much as shelling: the German *Schü* mine, scattered freely just under the surface of the ground, which blew your foot entirely off if you stepped on it. For years after the war ex-soldiers seized up when confronted by patches of grass and felt safe only when walking on asphalt or concrete. Fear among the troops was probably greatest in the staging areas just before D-Day: that was the largest assembly of Allied troops yet unblooded and combat-virgin. "Don't think they weren't afraid," one American woman who worked with the Red Cross says in Studs Terkel's *The Good War*. "Just before they went across to France, belts and ties were removed from some of these young men. They were very, very young."

What Unconditional Surrender Meant

FOR THOSE WHO FOUGHT, THE WAR HAD OTHER features unknown to those who looked on or got the war mediated through journalism. One such feature was the rate at which it destroyed human beings—friendly as well as enemy. Training for infantry fighting, few American soldiers were tough-minded enough to accept the full, awful implications of the term "replacement" in the designation of their Replace-

ment Training Centers. (The proposed euphemism "reinforcement" never caught on.) What was going to happen to the soldiers they were being trained to replace? Why should so many "replacements"—hundreds of thousands of them, actually—be required? The answers came soon enough in the European theater, in Italy, France, and finally Germany. In six weeks of fighting in Normandy, the 90th Infantry Division had to replace 150 percent of its officers and more than 100 percent of its men. If a division was engaged for more than three months, the probability was that every one of its second lieutenants, all 132 of them, would be killed or wounded. For those being prepared as replacements at officer candidate schools, it was not mentally healthy to dwell on the oddity of the schools' turning out hundreds of new junior officers weekly after the army had reached its full wartime strength. Only experience would make the need clear. The commanding officer of the 6th King's Own Scottish Borderers, which finally arrived in Hamburg in 1945 after fighting all the way from Normandy, found an average of five original men remaining (out of around 200) in each rifle company. "I was appalled," he said. "I had no idea it was going to be like that."

And it was not just wounds and death that depopulated the rifle companies. In the South Pacific it was malaria, dengue, blackwater fever, and dysentery; in Europe, dysentery, pneumonia, and trench foot. What disease did to the troops in the Pacific has never been widely known. The ingestion of Atabrine, the wartime substitute for quinine as a malaria preventive, has caused ears to ring for a lifetime, and decades afterward thousands still undergo their regular malaria attacks, freezing and burning and shaking all over. In Burma, British and American troops suffered so regularly from dysentery that they cut large holes in the seats of their trousers to simplify things. But worse was the mental attrition suffered by combat troops, who learned from experience the inevitability of their ultimate mental breakdown, ranging from the milder forms of treatable psychoneurosis to outright violent insanity.

In war it is not just the weak soldiers, or the sensitive ones, or the highly imaginative or cowardly ones, who will break down. All will break down if in combat long enough. "Long enough" is now defined by physicians and psychiatrists as between 200 and 240 days. For every frontline soldier in the Second World War, according to John Ellis, there was the "slowly dawning and dreadful realisation that there was no way out, that . . . it was only a matter of time before they got killed or maimed or broke down completely." As one British officer put it, "You go in, you come out, you go in again and you keep doing it until they break you or you are dead." This "slowly dawning and dreadful realisation" usually occurs as a result of two stages of rationalization and one of accurate perception:

1. It *can't* happen to me. I am too clever / agile / well-

trained / good-looking / beloved / tightly laced / etc. This persuasion gradually erodes into

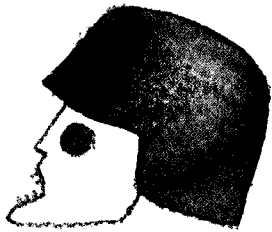
2. It *can* happen to me, and I'd better be more careful. I can avoid the danger by keeping extra alert at all times / watching more prudently the way I take cover or dig in or expose my position by firing my weapon / etc. This conviction attenuates in turn to the perception that death and injury are matters more of bad luck than lack of skill, making inevitable the third stage of awareness:

3. It *is going to* happen to me, and only my not being there is going to prevent it.

Because of the words *unconditional surrender*, it became clear in this war that no sort of lucky armistice or surprise political negotiation was going to give the long-term frontline man his pardon. "It soon became apparent," John Ellis writes, "that every yard of ground would have to be torn from the enemy and only killing as many men as possible would enable one to do this. Combat was reduced to its absolute essentials, kill or be killed." It was this that made this second Western Front war unique: it could end only when the line (or the Soviet line) arrived

der unaccustomed physical and social conditions, like enforced obedience, bad food, and an absence of baths. In 1943 the United States Army grew by 2 million men, but only about 365,000 of those went to combat units, and an even smaller number ended up in the rifle companies. The bizarre size and weight of the administrative tail dragged across Europe by the American forces is implied by statistics: from 1941 to 1945 the number of men whose job was fighting increased by only 100,000. If by the end there were 11 million men in the American army, only 2 million were in the ninety combat divisions, and of those, fewer than 700,000 were in the infantry. Regardless of the persisting fiction, those men know by experience the truth enunciated by John Ellis that

World War II was not a war of movement, except on the rare occasions when the enemy was in retreat; it was a bloody slogging match in which mobility was only occasionally of real significance. Indeed, . . . the internal combustion engine was not a major consideration in the ground war.



**IN WAR IT IS NOT JUST THE WEAK SOLDIERS, OR THE
HIGHLY IMAGINATIVE OR COWARDLY ONES,
WHO WILL BREAK DOWN. ALL WILL BREAK DOWN IF IN
COMBAT LONG ENOUGH.**

in Berlin. In the Second World War the American military learned something very "modern"—modern because dramatically "psychological," utilitarian, unchivalric, and unheroic: it learned that men will inevitably go mad in battle and that no appeal to patriotism, manliness, or loyalty to the group will ultimately matter. Thus in later wars things were arranged differently. In Korea and Vietnam it was understood that a man fulfilled his combat obligation and bought his reprieve if he served a fixed term, 365 days—and not days in combat but days in the theater of war. The infantry was now treated somewhat like the air corps had been in the Second War: performance of a stated number of missions guaranteed escape.

"Disorganized Insanity"

IF MOST CIVILIANS DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THESE things, most soldiers didn't know about them either, because only a relatively small number did any fighting that brought them into mortal contact with the enemy. For the rest, engaged in supply, transportation, and administrative functions, the war constituted a period of undesired and uncomfortable foreign travel un-

The relative few who actually fought know that the war was not a matter of rational calculation. They know madness when they see it. They can draw the right conclusions from the fact that in order to invade the Continent the Allies killed 12,000 innocent French and Belgian civilians who happened to live in the wrong part of town—that is, too near the railway tracks, the bombers' target. The few who fought are able to respond appropriately—without surprise—to such a fact as this: in the Netherlands alone, more than 7,000 planes tore into the ground or the water, afflicted by bullets, flak, exhaustion of fuel or crew, "pilot error," discouragement, or suicidal intent. In a 1986 article in *Smithsonian* magazine about archaeological excavation in Dutch fields and drained marshes, Les Daly emphasized the multitudinousness, the mad repetitiveness of these 7,000 crashes, reminding readers that "the total fighter and bomber combat force of the U.S. Air Force today amounts to about 3,400 airplanes. To put it another way, the crash of 7,000 aircraft would mean that every square mile of the entire state of New Jersey would have shaken to the impact of a downed plane."

In the same way, the few who fought have little trouble

understanding other outcroppings of the irrational element, in events like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or for that matter the bombing of Hamburg or Darmstadt or Tokyo or Dresden. The destruction of Dresden *et al.* was about as rational as the German shooting of hostages to "punish" an area, or the American belief that an effective way into Germany was to plunge through the Hürtgen Forest, or the British and Canadian belief, two years earlier, that a great raid on Dieppe would be worthwhile. Revenge is not a rational motive, but it was the main motive in the American destruction of the Japanese empire.

Those who fought know this, just as they know that it is as likely for the man next to you to be shot through the eye, ear, testicles, or brain as through the shoulder (the way the cinema does it). A shell is as likely to blow his whole face off as to lodge a fragment in some mentionable and unvital tissue. Those who fought saw the bodies of thousands of self-destroyed Japanese men, women, and infants drifting off Saipan—sheer madness, but not essentially different from what Eisenhower described in *Crusade in Europe*, where, though not intending to make our flesh creep or to descend to nasty details, he couldn't help reporting honestly on the carnage in the Falaise Pocket. He wrote, "It was literally possible to walk for hundreds of yards at a time, stepping on nothing but dead and decaying flesh"—formerly German soldiers, who could have lived by surrendering but who chose, madly, not to.

How is it that these data are commonplaces only to the small number who had some direct experience of them? One reason is the normal human talent for looking on the bright side, for not receiving information likely to cause distress or to occasion a major overhaul of normal ethical, political, or psychological assumptions. But the more important reason is that the news correspondents, radio broadcasters, and film people who perceived these horrors kept quiet about them on behalf of the war effort, and so the large wartime audience never knew these things. As John Steinbeck finally confessed in 1958, "We were all part of the War Effort. We went along with it, and not only that, we abetted it. . . . I don't mean that the correspondents were liars. . . . It is in the things not mentioned that the untruth lies." By not mentioning a lot of things, a correspondent could give the audience at home the impression that there were no cowards in the service, no thieves or rapists or looters, no cruel or stupid commanders. It is true, Steinbeck was aware, that most military operations are examples of "disorganized insanity," but the morale of the home front could not be jeopardized by an eyewitness's saying so. And even if a correspondent wanted to deliver the noisome truth, patriotism would join censorship in stopping his mouth. As Steinbeck noted in *Once There Was a War*, "The foolish reporter who broke the rules would not be printed at home and in addition would be put out of the theater by the command."

STONE FIG

The young fig tree feels with its hands
along the white sunny wall
and at the end of August
produces seven fruits,
seven royal fists that will be
runny with seed, ripe
with a musky honey that rarefies sweetness.

For the sick woman in the bedroom
behind the all-day-drawn curtains
I set the fruit in the sun
by the kitchen window.
Seven brimming wineskins
and a flint from the garden
she must have collected with a smile,
for it looks exactly like a fig.

A stone fig,
a hard, smooth, comfort-in-the-hand
Platonic Idea of Fig.

I watch the others daily for readiness;
this one, and now that one.

As if they were the last of her feelings
the old lady gobbles the ripe figs.
Quickly, quickly, such greediness.
She eats them like anaesthetic.
Here's pith in her pale fingernails,
purple on the stubble of her chin.

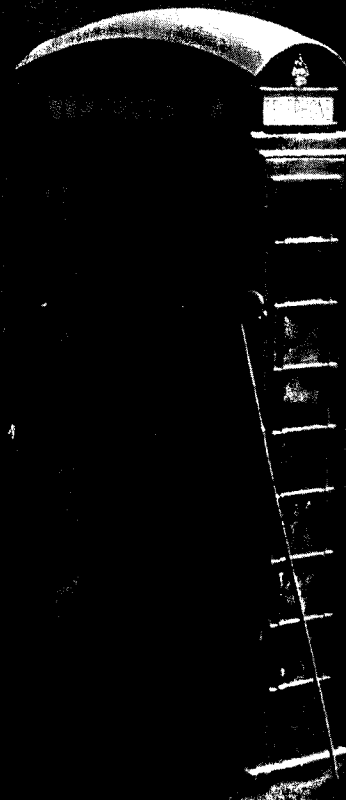
Her legs are dry twigs. She can't
trust them to take her to the toilet,
then back again. Her skin is mottled
with overripeness I look away from.

She wants, she smiles, to sleep
and sleep and sleep. And then
to sleep again.

—Anne Stevenson



Scottish window offices,
when you finally get one, aren't especially roomy.
However, they do come with rather attractive views.
The good things in life stay that way.



A POWERFUL PRESCRIPTION

By Bob Bergland

There's something special about living in America's wide open spaces. But when the nearest hospital is 45 miles away—like it is for people around Center, North Dakota—having an ambulance to narrow the distance can be a matter of life and death.

Last year, when that town nearly lost its ambulance service, the local electric cooperative did something about it.

Working with the local district health nurse, Oliver Mercer Electric Co-op quickly launched a campaign to recruit volunteers and mobilize community support. Today, people around Center have the comfort of knowing their ambulance service is ready to go in case of an emergency.

This kind of community action and leadership is what rural electrification is all about. Owned by the people they serve, the nation's 1,000 rural electric systems are "people" organizations, working with others to keep community foundations strong.

It's a given that adequate health care is a necessity, no matter the geographic location. But

in many parts of rural America, health care systems are in critical need of attention. Rural hospitals are closing at alarming rates. Health care delivery services are severely strained.

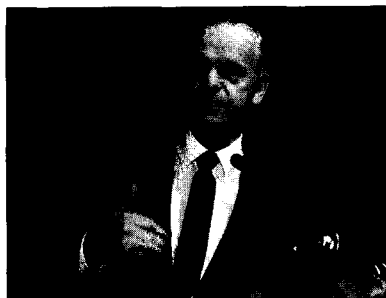


In response, electric cooperatives are helping health care providers galvanize local resources to meet those problems head-on. That's why in Arkansas, Carroll

Electric Co-op sponsors a "wellness" program that augments the local hospital's services. Health "fairs" conducted by Randolph Electric in North Carolina and Farmers Electric Co-op in New Mexico bring together health professionals and trained volunteers. They provide local residents with screening, referral and information services for health concerns like blood pressure, cholesterol, and cancer. And to help electric co-ops initiate and coordinate local activities, their national association now operates the National Rural Health Network.

Multiply these local efforts all around the country and you can see how electric co-ops are agents of progress . . . organizations whose helping hand and can-do spirit touch the lives of millions of Americans.

A commitment to sound health care delivery is just one item on our civic agenda . . . one more example of how rural electrics are generating more than electricity.



Bob Bergland is Executive Vice President of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



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The Necessity of Euphemism

THE WAY CENSORSHIP OPERATED TO KEEP THE real war from being known is suggested by Herbert Merillat, who during the war was a bright and sensitive public-relations officer attached to the Marines on Guadalcanal. In addition to generating Joe Blow stories, he had the job of censor: he was empowered to pass stories consonant with "the war effort" and to kill all others. Of a day in November, 1942, he wrote in *Guadalcanal Remembered*,

A recently arrived sergeant-reporter came around this afternoon, very excited, very earnest. Having gone through one naval shelling and two bombings he has decided that war is hell, and that he should write something stark. He showed me a long piece on the terror of men during bombings and shellings, the pain of the wounded, the disease and unpleasantness of this place. It was a gloomy and distorted piece; you would get the idea that every marine on the island is a terror-stricken, beaten man. I tried to tell him the picture was badly skewed.

That's how the people at home were kept in innocence of malaria, dysentery, terror, bad attitude, and psychoneurosis. Occasionally there might be an encounter between home-front sentimentality and frontline vileness, as in an episode recalled by Charles MacDonald, a rifle-company commander in Europe, in his 1947 book *Company Commander*. One glib reporter got far enough forward to encounter some infantrymen on the line, to whom he put cheerful questions like, "What would you like best from the States about now?" At first he got nothing but sullen looks and silence. But finally one soldier spoke:

"I've got something to say. Tell them it's too damned serious over here to be talking about hot dogs and baked beans and things we're missing. Tell them it's hell, and tell them there're men getting killed and wounded every minute, and they're miserable and they're suffering. Tell them it's a matter more serious than they'll ever be able to understand"—

at which point "there was a choking sob in his voice," MacDonald remembered. Then the soldier got out the rest of his urgent message: "Tell 'em it's rough as hell. Tell 'em it's rough. Tell 'em it's rough, serious business. That's all. That's all."

Ernie Pyle, well known as the infantry's advocate, was an accredited correspondent, which meant that he, too, had to obey the rules—that is, reveal only about a third of the actuality and, just like the other journalists, fuel all the misconceptions: that officers were admired, if not loved; that soldiers were dutiful, if frightened; and that everyone on the Allied side was sort of nice. One of Pyle's best-known pieces is his description of the return to his company in Italy of the body of Captain Henry T. Waskow, "of Belton, Texas." Such ostentatious geographi-

cal precision only calls attention to the genteel vagueness with which Pyle was content to depict the captain's wound and body. Brought down from a mountain by muleback, Captain Waskow's body was laid out on the ground at night and respectfully visited by officers and men of the company. The closest Pyle came to accurate registration was reporting that one man, who sat by the body for some time, holding the captain's hand and looking into his face, finally "reached over and gently straightened the points of the captain's shirt collar, and then he sort of arranged the tattered edges of the uniform around the wound." While delivering an account satisfying on its own terms, this leaves untouched what normally would be thought journalistically indispensable questions, and certainly questions bound to occur to readers hoping to derive from the Infantry's Friend (as Pyle was often called) an accurate image of the infantry's experience. Questions like these: What killed Captain Waskow? Bullet, shell fragments, a mine, or what? Where was his wound? How large was it? You imply that it was in the traditional noble place, the chest. Was it? Was it a little hole, or was it a great red missing place? Was it perhaps in the crotch, or in the testicles, or in the belly? Were his entrails extruded, or in any way visible? Did the faithful soldier wash off his hands after toying with those "tattered edges"? Were the captain's eyes open? Did his face look happy? Surprised? Satisfied? Angry?

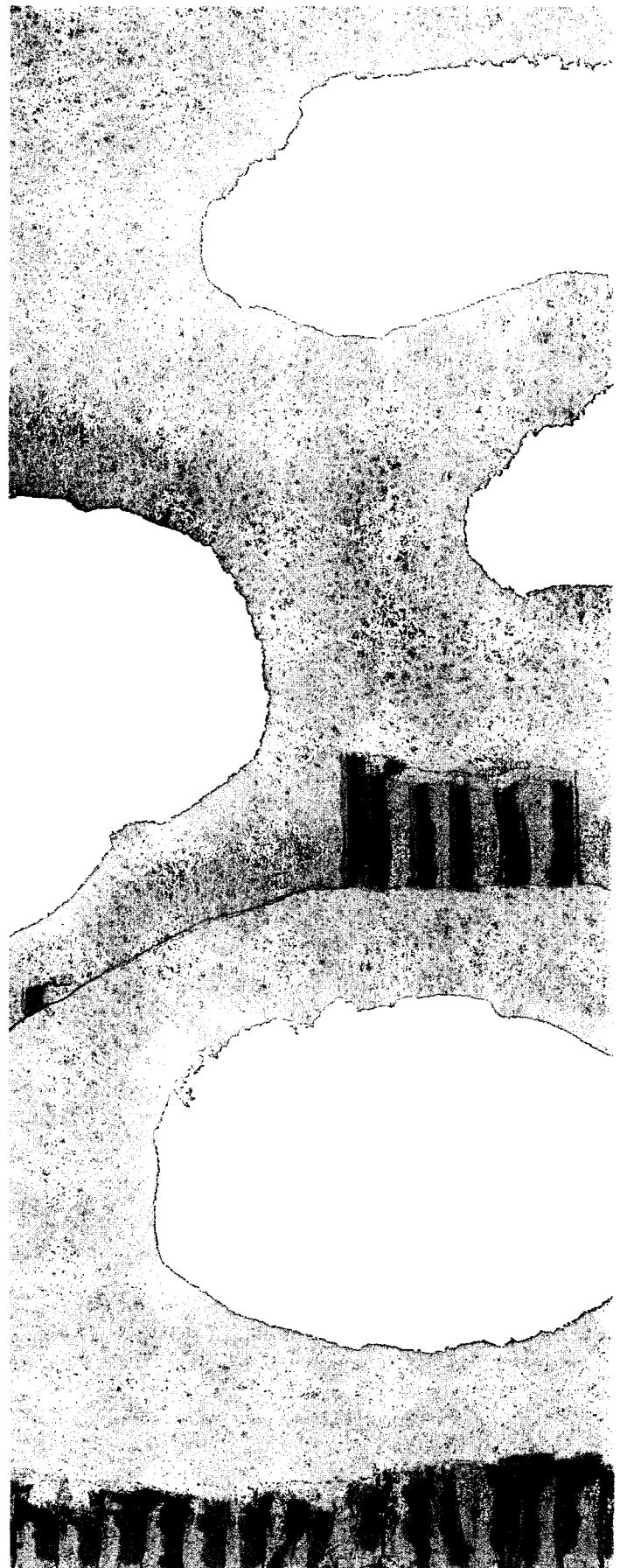
But even Pyle's copy, resembling as it does the emissions from the Office of War Information, is frankness itself compared with what German correspondents were allowed to send. They were a part of the military, not just civilians attached to it, and like all other German troops, they had taken the oath to the Führer. Their job was strictly propaganda, and throughout the war they obeyed the invariable rule that German servicemen were never, never to be shown dead in photographs, moving or still, and that their bodies, if ever mentioned, were to be treated with verbal soft focus. Certainly, so far as the German home front knew, soldiers' bodies were not dismembered, decapitated, eviscerated, or flattened out by tank treads until they looked like plywood. Even more than the testimonies sent back by such as Steinbeck and Pyle, the narratives presented to the German people were nothing but fairy stories of total heroism, stamina, good will, and cheerfulness. This meant that for almost six years a large slice of actuality was declared off limits, and the sanitized and euphemized remainder was presented as the whole. Both sides were offered not just false data but worse: false assumptions about human nature and behavior, assumptions whose effect was to define either a world without a complicated principle of evil or one where all evil was easily displaced onto one simplified enemy—Jews on the Axis side, Nazis and "Japs" on the Allied. The postwar result for the Allies, at least, is suggested by one returning Canadian soldier, wounded three times in Normandy and Holland, who recalls (in *Six War*

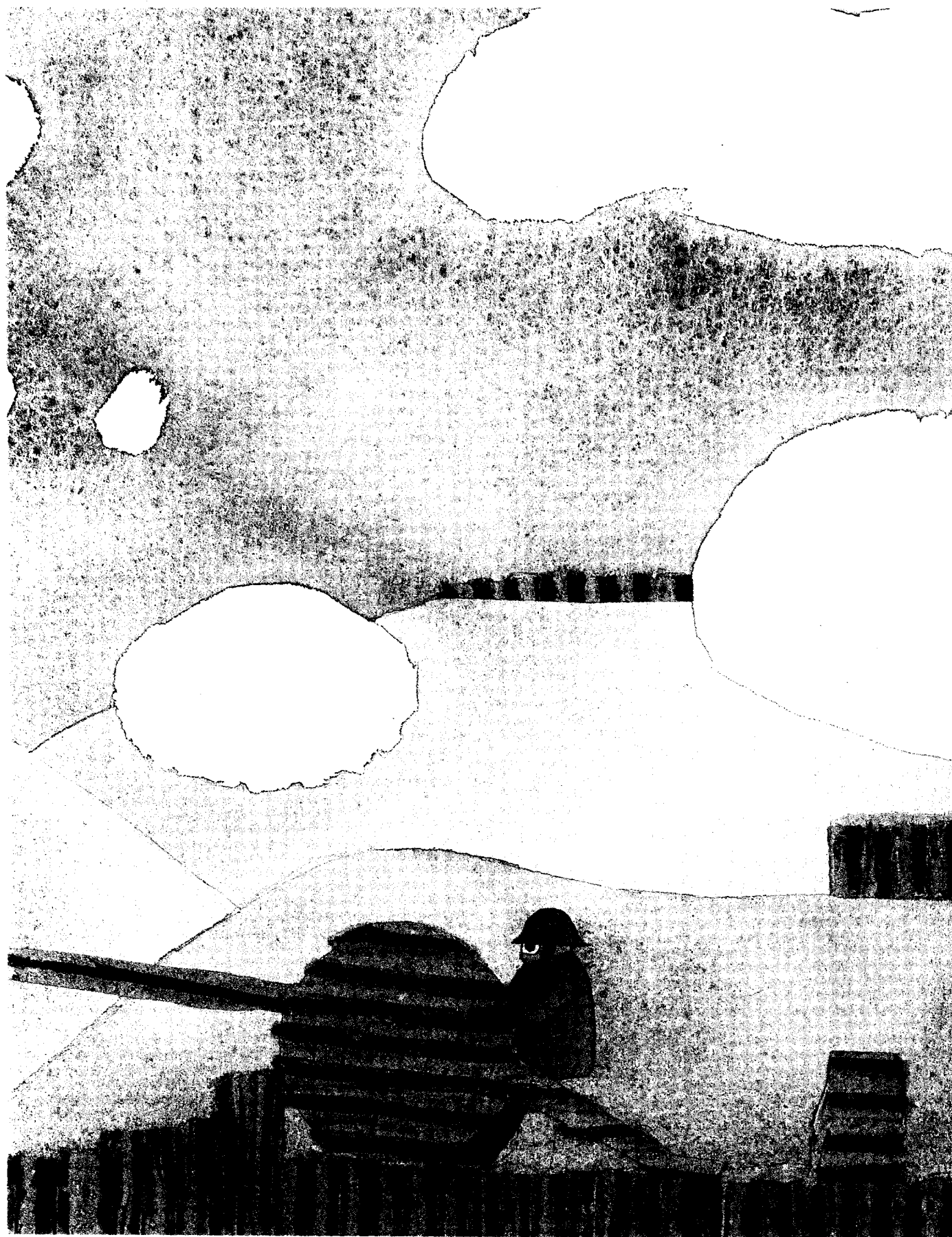
Years 1939–1945, edited by Barry Broadfoot) disembarking with his buddies to find on the quay nice, smiling Red Cross or Salvation Army girls.

They give us a little bag and it has a couple of chocolate bars in it and a comic book. . . . We had gone overseas not much more than children but we were coming back, sure, let's face it, as killers. And they were still treating us as children. Candy and comic books.

Considering that they were running the war, it is surprising how little some officials on each side knew about the real war and its conditions. Some didn't care to know—like Adolf Hitler, who refused to visit Hamburg after its terrible fire storm in the summer of 1943. Some thought they knew about the real war—like Josef Goebbels, who did once visit the Eastern Front. But there he “assimilated reality to his own fantasies,” as Neil Acherson has said, and took away only evidence establishing that the troops were “brave fellows” and that his own morale-building speeches were “rapturously received.” His knowledge of ground warfare remained largely literary: the course of the Punic Wars and the campaigns of Frederick the Great had persuaded him (or so he said) that in war “spirit” counts for more than luck or quantity of deployable men and munitions.

In addition to a calculating ignorance, a notable but not unique emotional coldness in the face of misery helped insulate him from the human implications of unpleasant facts. In his diary for September 20, 1943, airily and without any emotion or comment (not even a conventional “I was sorry to see” or “It is painful to say”), he totaled up the casualty figures for two years on the Eastern Front alone: “Our total losses in the East, exclusive of Lapland, from June 22, 1941, to August 31, 1943, were 548,480 dead, of whom 18,512 were officers; 1,998,991 wounded, of whom 51,670 were officers; 354,957 missing, of whom 11,597 were officers; total 2,902,438, of whom 81,779 were officers.” If it was callousness that protected Goebbels from the human implications of these numbers, it was rank and totemic identity that protected King George VI from a lot of instructive unpleasantness. According to John W. Wheeler-Bennett, his official biographer, what the King saw on his numerous visits to bombed areas fueled only his instinct for high-mindedness. He concluded that among the bombed and maimed he was witnessing “a fellowship of self-sacrifice and ‘good-neighbourliness,’ a comradeship of adversity in which men and women gave of their noblest to one another, a brotherhood of man in which the artificial barriers of caste and class were broken down.” The King never saw perfect fear operating as Connolly saw it, and it is unlikely that anyone told him that while the Normandy invasion was taking place, “almost every police station and detention camp in Britain was jam-packed full,” as Peter Grafton put it, in *You, You and You*. “In Glasgow alone . . . deserters were sitting twelve to a cell.” It is hard to believe that





the King was aware of all the bitter anti-Jewish graffiti his subjects were scrawling up in public places. Nor is it recorded that he took in news of the thievery, looting, and robbing of the dead which were widely visible in the raided areas. Thirty-four people were killed in the cellar ballroom of the Café de Paris on March 8, 1941, when a bomb penetrated the ceiling and exploded on the bandstand, wiping out the band and many of the dancers. Nicholas Monsarrat, in his autobiography *Breaking In, Breaking Out*, recalled the scene that followed.

The first thing which the rescue squads and the firemen saw, as their torches poked through the gloom and the smoke and the bloody pit which had lately been the most chic cellar in London, was a frieze of other shadowy men, night-creatures who had scuttled within as soon as the echoes ceased, crouching over any dead or wounded woman, any *soignée* corpse they could find, and ripping off its necklace, or earrings, or brooch: rifling its handbag, scooping up its loose change.

That vignette suggests the difficulty of piercing the barrier of romantic optimism about human nature implicit in the Allied victory and the resounding Allied extirpation of flagrant evil. If it is a jolt to realize that blitzed London generated a whole class of skillful corpse robbers, it is because within the moral assumptions of the Allied side that fact would be inexplicable. One could say of the real war what Barbara Foley has written of the Holocaust—not that it is “unknowable” but that “its full dimensions are inaccessible to the ideological frameworks that we have inherited from the liberal era.”

Unmelodramatized Horror

FINDING THE OFFICIAL, SANITIZED, “KING George” war unbelievable, not at all in accord with actual human nature, where might one turn in search of the real, heavy-duty war? After scrutinizing closely the facts of the American Civil War, after seeing and listening to hundreds of the wounded, Walt Whitman declared, “The real war will never get in the books.” Nor, of course, will the real Second World War. But the actualities of the war are more clearly knowable from some books than from others. The real war is unlikely to be found in novels, for example, for they must exhibit, if not plot, at least pace, and their characters tend to assume the cliché forms demanded by Hollywood, even the new Hollywood, and even if the novels are as honorable as Harry Brown’s *A Walk in the Sun*, Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*, and Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22*. Not to mention what is perhaps the best of them, James Jones’s *The Thin Red Line*. Sensing that action and emotion during the war were too big and too messy and too varied for confinement in one 300-page volume of fiction, the British have tended to refract the war in trilogies, and some are brilliant: Evelyn Waugh’s *Sword of Honor* (1965), of course, collecting his

three novels about Guy Crouchback’s disillusioning war, written from 1952 to 1961; Olivia Manning’s *Balkan Trilogy* (1960–1965); Anthony Powell’s *A Dance to the Music of Time: Third Movement* (1964–1968); and Manning’s *Levant Trilogy* (1977–1980). The American way seems to be less to conceive a trilogy than to produce three novels of different sorts and then, finding them on one’s hands, to argue that they constitute a trilogy, as James Jones did. Despite many novels’ undoubted success as engaging narrative, few have succeeded in making a motive, almost a character, of a predominant wartime emotion—boredom—or persuading readers that the horrors have not been melodramatized. One turns, thus, from novels to nonfiction, especially memoirs, and especially memoirs written by participants not conscious of serving any very elevated artistic ambition. The best are those devoid of significant dialogue, almost always a sign of *ex post facto* novelistic visitation. Because they were forbidden in all theaters of war, lest their capture reveal secrets, clandestine diaries, seen and censored by no authority, offer one of the most promising accesses to actuality. The prohibition of diaries often meant increased devotion and care on the part of the writer. In Cairo in April of 1943 D. A. Simmonds, an RAF pilot officer, addressed his diary thus:

I understand that the writing of diaries is definitely forbidden in the services, and you must therefore consider yourself a very lucky diary to have so much time and energy expended on you when you’re not entitled to be in existence at all.

And, a month later, “You are becoming quite a big lad now, my diary; slowly but surely your pages swell.”

One diary in which much of the real war can be found is James J. Fahey’s *Pacific War Diary* (1963). Fahey, a seaman first class on the light cruiser U.S.S. *Montpelier*, was an extraordinarily patient, decent person, devoid of literary sophistication, and the authenticity of his experience can be inferred from his constant obsession with hunger and food, subjects as interesting as combat.

For breakfast we had some hash and 1 bun, for dinner baloney sandwich, and for supper we had coffee, baloney sandwich, 1 cookie and 1 candy bar. This morning our ship shot down its lucky #13 Jap plane and one probable.

Almost as trustworthy as such daily entries, unrevised later, are accounts of events written soon after by intelligent participants, like Keith Douglas (*Alamein to Zem Zem*, 1946), John Guest (*Broken Images*, 1949), and Neil McCallum (*Journey With a Pistol*, 1959). Those are British, and they are typical British literary performances, educated, allusive, artistically sensitive, a reminder of the British expectation that highly accomplished and even stylish young men would often be found serving in the infantry and the tanks. There they would be in a position to create the sort of war memoirs virtually nonexistent among

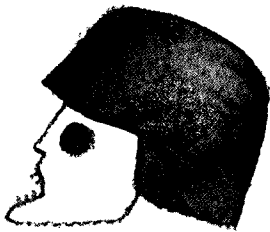
Americans—the sort that generate a subtle, historically conscious irony by juxtaposing traditional intellectual or artistic images of transcendence against an unflinching, fully mature registration of wartime barbarism.

The best American memoirs are different, conveying their terrible news less by allusion and suggestion and ironic learned comment than by an uncomplicated delivery of the facts, in a style whose literary unpretentiousness seems to argue absolute credibility. No American would write of his transformation from civilian into soldier the way John Guest did, in *Broken Images*: “I am undergoing a land-change into something coarse and strange.” American attempts to avoid the plain frequently backfire, occasioning embarrassing outbreaks of Fine Writing. Speaking of the arrival, finally, of American planes on Guadalcanal, one U.S. Marine, Robert Leckie, wrote in *Helmet for My Pillow*:

All of Guadalcanal was alive with hope and vibrant with the scent of victory. . . . The enemy was running! The siege was broken! And all through the day, like a mighty Te Deum rising to Heaven, came the beat of

have been a Marine. He is uncritical of and certainly uncynical about Bob Hope’s contribution to the entertainment of the forces, and on the topic of medals and awards he is totally unironic—he takes them seriously, believing that those who have been given them deserve them. He doesn’t like to say *shit* and he prays, out loud. He comes through as such a nice person, so little inclined to think ill of others, that forty years after the war he still can’t figure out why loose and wayward straps on haversacks and the like should be called, by disapproving sergeants and officers, *Irish pennants*: “Why Irish I never knew.” Clearly he is not a man to misrepresent experience for the momentary pleasure of a little show business.

If innocent when he joined the Marines, Sledge was not at all stupid, and he knew that what he was getting into was going to be “tough”: in training, the emphasis on the Ka-Bar knife and kicking the Japs effectively in the genitals made that clear. But any remaining scales fell from his eyes when he saw men simply hosed down by machine-gun fire on the beach at Peleliu: “I felt sickened to the depths of my soul. I asked God, ‘Why, why, why?’”



CONSIDERING THAT THEY WERE RUNNING THE WAR, IT IS SURPRISING HOW LITTLE SOME OFFICIALS ON EACH SIDE KNEW ABOUT THE REAL WAR AND ITS CONDITIONS. SOME DIDN'T CARE TO KNOW.

the airplane motors. Oh, how sweet the air I breathed that day! How fresh and clean and sprightly the life that leapt in my veins.

In contrast, the American procedure at its best, unashamed of simplicity, is visible in Eugene Sledge’s memoir of a boy’s experience fighting with “the old breed,” the United States Marines. His *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (1981) is one of the finest memoirs to emerge from any war, and no Briton could have written it. Born in Mobile, Alabama, in 1923, Sledge enlisted in December, 1942. After his miraculous survival in the war, he threw himself into the study of zoology and ultimately became a professor of biology at the University of Montevallo, in Alabama. The main theme of *With the Old Breed* is, as Sledge indicates, “the vast difference” between what has been published about these two Marine Corps battles, which depicts them as more or less sane activities, and his own experience “on the front line.” One reason Sledge’s account is instantly credible is the amount of detail with which he registers his presence at the cutting edge, but another is his tone—unpretentious, unsophisticated, modest, and decent. Despite all the horrors he recounts, he is proud to

I turned my face away and wished that I were imagining it all. I had tasted the bitterest essence of the war, the sight of helpless comrades being slaughtered, and it filled me with disgust.” Before the battle for Peleliu was over, with casualties worse even than at Tarawa, Sledge perceived what all combat troops finally perceive: “We were expendable! It was difficult to accept. We come from a nation and a culture that values life and the individual. To find oneself in a situation where your life seems of little value is the ultimate in loneliness. It is a humbling experience.” He knew now that horror and fear were his destiny, unless a severe wound or death or (most unlikely) a Japanese surrender should reprieve him. And his understanding of the world he was in was filled out by watching Marines levering out Japanese gold teeth with their Ka-Bar knives, sometimes from living mouths. The Japanese “defense” encapsulated the ideas and forms and techniques of “waste” and “madness.” The Japanese knew they could neither repel the Marines nor be reinforced. Knowing this, they simply killed, without hope and without meaning.

Peleliu finally secured, Sledge’s decimated unit was reconstituted for the landing on southern Okinawa. It was

there that he saw “the most repulsive thing I ever saw an American do in the war”—he saw a young Marine officer select a Japanese corpse, stand over it, and urinate into its mouth. Speaking of the “incredible cruelty” that was commonplace when “decent men were reduced to a brutish existence in their fight for survival amid the violent death, terror, tension, fatigue, and filth that was the infantryman’s war,” Sledge notes that “our code of conduct toward the enemy differed drastically from that prevailing back at the division CP.” Unequivocal is Sledge’s assertion that “we lived in an environment totally incomprehensible”—not just to civilians at a great distance but “to men behind the lines.”

But for Sledge, the worst of all was a week-long stay in rain-soaked foxholes on a muddy ridge facing the Japanese, a site strewn with decomposing corpses turning various colors, nauseating with the stench of death, “an environment so degrading I believed we had been flung into hell’s own cesspool.” Because there were no latrines and because there was no moving in daylight, the men relieved themselves in their holes and flung the excrement out into the already foul mud. It was a latter-day Verdun, the Marine occupation of that ridge, where the artillery shellings uncovered scores of half-buried Marine and Japanese bodies, making the position “a stinking compost pile.”

If a marine slipped and slid down the back slope of the muddy ridge, he was apt to reach the bottom vomiting. I saw more than one man lose his footing and slip and slide all the way to the bottom only to stand up horror-stricken as he watched in disbelief while fat maggots tumbled out of his muddy dungaree pockets, cartridge belt, legging lacings, and the like. . . .

We didn’t talk about such things. They were too horrible and obscene even for hardened veterans. . . . It is too preposterous to think that men could actually live and fight for days and nights on end under such terrible conditions and not be driven insane. . . . To me the war was insanity.

And from the other side of the world the young British officer Neil McCallum, in *Journey With a Pistol*, issued a similar implicit warning against the self-delusive attempt to confer high moral meaning on these grievous struggles for survival. Far from rationalizing their actions as elements of a crusade, McCallum and his men, he said, had “ceased largely to think or believe at all.”

Annihilation of the spirit. The game does not appear to be worth the candle. What is seen through the explosions is that this, no less than any other war, is not a moral war. Greek against Greek, against Persian, Roman against the world, cowboys against Indians, Catholics against Protestants, black men against white—this is merely the current phase of an historical story. It is war, and to believe it is anything but a lot of people killing each other is to pretend it is something else, and to misread man’s instinct to commit murder.

IN SOME WARTIME VERSES TITLED “WAR POET,” THE British soldier Donald Bain tried to answer critics and patriots who argued that poets were failing to register the meaning of the war, choosing instead to note mere incoherent details and leaving untouched and uninterpreted the great design of the whole. Defending contemporary poets and writers, Bain wrote:

We in our haste can only see the small components of the scene;
We cannot tell what incidents will focus on the final screen.
A barrage of disruptive sound, a petal on a sleeping face,
Both must be noted, both must have their place.
It may be that our later selves or else our unborn sons
Will search for meaning in the dust of long deserted guns.
We only watch, and indicate, and make our scribbled pencil notes.
We do not wish to moralize, only to ease our dusty throats.

But what time seems to have shown our later selves is that perhaps there was less coherent meaning in the events of wartime than we had hoped. Deprived of a satisfying final focus by both the enormity of the war and the unmanageable copiousness of its verbal and visual residue, all the revisitor of this imagery can do, turning now this way, now that, is to indicate a few components of the scene. And despite the preponderance of vileness, not all are vile.

One wartime moment not at all vile occurred on June 5, 1944, when Dwight Eisenhower, entirely alone and for the moment disjunct from his publicity apparatus, changed the passive voice to active in the penciled statement he wrote out to have ready when the invasion was repulsed, his troops torn apart for nothing, his planes ripped and smashed to no end, his warships sunk, his reputation blasted: “Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops.” Originally he wrote, “the troops have been withdrawn,” as if by some distant, anonymous agency instead of by an identifiable man making all-but-impossible decisions. Having ventured this bold revision, and secure in his painful acceptance of full personal accountability, he was able to proceed unevasively with “My decision to attack at this time and place was based on the best information available.” Then, after the conventional “credit,” distributed equally to “the troops, the air, and the navy,” came Eisenhower’s noble acceptance of total personal responsibility: “If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone.” As Mailer says, you use the word *shit* so that you can use the word *noble*, and you refuse to ignore the stupidity and barbarism and ignobility and poltroonery and filth of the real war so that *it is mine alone* can flash out, a bright signal in a dark time. □

A Short Story



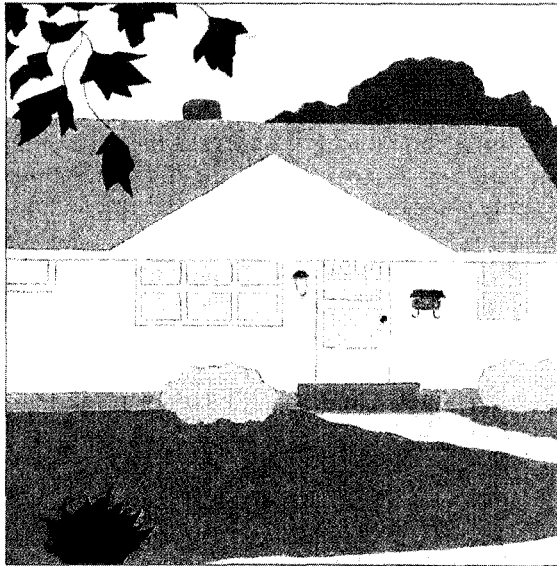
Someplace Like New Jersey

by Deborah Chanley Weiss

THE FEBRUARY I turned twelve, my mother left home for God knows where with a man named Stefan Oleander, who promised to teach her to play the organ. I told people she had been awarded a special adult music scholarship to study in Italy and that she'd be back in six months. The truth was I never knew her to so much as whistle, and her return was hardly a sure thing. My mother's departure, on an unseasonably warm winter's day, was one further source of angry embarrassment to me, added as it was to all the other ways in which I saw her as apart and different.

I truly believe things began to go off course from day one, when she named me Emogene Vera. It was not a child's name. It hung from me like an ill-fitting hand-me-down overcoat, flapping at my heels, tripping me. Once, I told my mother I hated the name, and she said, "Well, I liked it." I asked her if my father had wanted to name me Emogene too, and she said no, he'd have called me Barbara. "But that's so unimaginative, so pedestrian," she explained, rolling her eyes. It was my first inkling that my father might not always be able to protect me.

Where I grew up, in Queens, many of the apartment buildings had pretentious names to accompany their shallow, whitewashed porticos with pillars made grimy by city soot. I lived in the Monticello, with its six floors of near-strangers and a small band of friends. My buddies' parents thought I was sweet and had lovely manners. But I knew I wasn't such a good person. I carried with me secrets, and I lied. I said I thought my mother was beautiful, when really I wanted her to cut her ponytail, and perm her hair, like the other mothers.



*Maybe the only
thing worse than Mother's
disappearance was the possibility
that she might come back*

It seemed to me that every few months young families moved out of the Monticello, to migrate to the suburbs. When my father signed another year's lease on our apartment, I told people that he and a world-famous architect were designing a house for us. The July day that my best friend, Janet, from 5-C, moved to an L-shaped ranch, it was betrayal I felt as I kept a hot and steamy vigil, my eyes glued to the expanding chests and beefy arms of the men from Atlas who loaded the moving van and drove off with everything Janet owned, including all the goods of childhood that I had expected us to share for a lot longer. Later that day I stood in front of my mother, who, as usual, was buried behind a magazine. An electric fan clicked and whirled at her elbow in its fee-

ble attempt to move the air.

"I'm baking to death in this apartment," I told her.

My mother nodded, but when she was reading she was as good as deaf. And her magazines made everything worse. Hers were magazines without photos, without advice columns or fashions. I had looked through them and found only pages of print and a few line drawings, a cartoon or two. I had checked around. Mine was the only mother who never read *McCalls* or *Good Housekeeping*. It was no wonder our place looked so odd. Nothing matched. No attention was paid to the coordination of color and furniture. We seemed to live in a perpetual state of dissonance. I salvaged old copies of *House Beautiful* from the incinerator room and left them for my mother, hoping she'd pick up the tricks of homemaking.

"Are you listening? I can't breathe in this apartment. We should get out of here."

Finally my mother looked up. "And go where?"

"To a house. Someplace with trees. And a backyard grill. New Jersey."

My mother's head snapped back. "New Jersey? Where thousands die every year falling into the open flames of barbecue pits?"

I hated being mocked, dismissed so easily. "It doesn't have to be New Jersey." I spoke through clenched teeth, determined not to cry. I grabbed the magazine from my mother and ripped it apart. A piece was sucked into the fan's blades. "We could go someplace *like* New Jersey."

MY FATHER WORKED IN BROOKLYN AT A JOB DESCRIBED in the family as "helping Uncle Manny keep the books." Uncle Manny (actually my grandmother's cousin) had made a petty fortune distributing parts for heating and cooling systems, and as I later learned, he had taken my father in as a family favor. I met Uncle Manny only twice, and despite all the years my father traveled the subways to get to work, Uncle Manny's sons eventually inherited the business and eased my father out. Still, I led my friends to believe that the family was close and that my father's counsel made the company millions.

My parents spent days hissing at each other. Other days were spent in silence. They were locked in a private struggle I barely understood, but I believed it would cease if only my mother would style her hair, throw out those stupid magazines, and stop feeding us cold cuts and artichoke hearts three times a week. If she started acting like a regular mother, we'd be able to leave the Monticello.

When my father came home from work in the evenings, he'd go straight for my little sister, Naomi, and nuzzle her belly with kisses. For my mother he had few words. Often all he did was ask if any bills had arrived and if we had Scotch in the house. Of me he always asked the same question: "And how're things with you, young lady?" I'd tell him about a spelling test, or about some kid who threw up at lunch. I'd describe my tap lessons and my current-events reports. He'd drop a dime into my palm and tell me I was terrific. And then I'd switch into high gear, telling him about a classmate's father who had malaria, or about a visit Princess Grace of Monaco was to make to my class, or about a kid who killed his little brother and was kicked out of school. Sometimes I knew I was making things up and sometimes I didn't; after a while I didn't care.

EVEN NOW, WELL BEYOND THE TURBULENCE OF childhood, asleep with my husband's arm across my breast, I still wake with a sense of chilly disorientation when I dream of a certain flat, silvery light. It is the light that washed over me as I crouched in the hallway, late at night, watching my father as he sat in the dark in front of the television. I knew where my mother was. She was alone in the bedroom. One Sunday night my father caught me. "You want to watch this with me?" I was shocked. Had he forgotten the time? That tomorrow was a school day? For a moment I thought I'd show him what a good, responsible person I was and go back to bed. But the offer to see Loretta Young, who swept onto the screen in the most glamorous gowns, the chance to watch an adult program at a forbidden hour with my father, was not to be denied.

I took the chair to my father's left as he leaned forward to stop the screen from rolling. At times he watched television with the sound so low you could barely hear it, and sometimes he'd sit through ten or fifteen minutes with the picture fuzzy or skewed on the diagonal. He had an enormous tolerance for things not quite right.

"You've missed a bit," he said kindly. "I can't fill you in on everything."

That's okay, I thought. It was quite all right, really. I was happy just to be there. I'd figure it out.

"But that woman," he said, pointing to Loretta, "is the mother of that man over there. The one with the gun. Only he doesn't know she's his mother, because she gave him up for adoption when he was a baby. And that woman next to Loretta is his adoptive mother."

It was all so deliciously complicated. So grown up. I worried only the tiniest bit that things wouldn't turn out right for Loretta and her family.

"How come Mommy doesn't like the show? I think it's superbly acted." I believed my

father liked people best when they spoke like adults. Too often I had heard him accuse my mother of sounding irrational and of acting like a three-year-old.

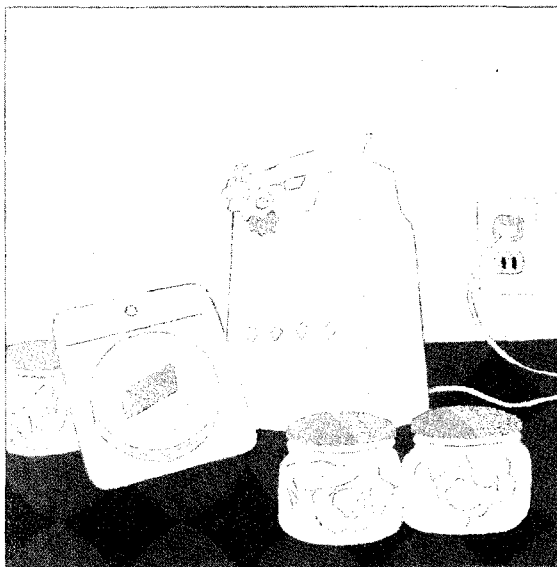
"Your mother doesn't have ordinary sensibilities. She's weary."

"Of television?"

I saw his face reflected in the set's cold, silvery light. My father seldom spent words on himself, always leaving us to puzzle out where he stood on things.

"Television. Everything," he finally said.

Everything, I realized, included people, even me, and I knew then that not I but my mother should be sitting



there alone in the dark with her husband. And I was trying to figure out if being weary was the same thing as being sick and tired of something, because I'd learned from my own experience trying to master dividing by fractions that after a while a person could get sick and tired of the effort and give up.

THE FIRST TIME I MET STEFAN OLEANDER, I thought he was there in the apartment with my mother to pick up rugs to be cleaned. That's because when I came in on them, they were sitting together on the living-room floor and neither one got up. When I looked closer, I saw that Oleander wasn't inspecting the rugs, he was holding a recorder. Instead of saying hello, he began playing a tune that I remember as being irritatingly high-pitched and not very melodic. I thought Oleander looked dumb, sitting cross-legged on the floor. Yet my mother looked curiously soft, as if her bones had been replaced with cotton stuffing.

"This is Stefan Oleander." Oleander played on. "This is Emogene, Stefan." Oleander winked at me.

"Where's Naomi?" I asked, looking around for her.

"She's at Nana's."

Now, that was news right there. Nana and my mother weren't on close terms, and Nana baby-sat in the middle of the day only in emergencies. "What's wrong?" For an awful moment I was terrified that my father had suddenly died and that Oleander and my mother were sitting on the rug engaged in some bizarre display of grief. My mother said everything was fine. In fact, she used the word "exquisite."

Oleander became a frequent visitor that fall. While the leaves turned and the days grew shorter, his relationship with my mother took root. Often he was there when I got home from school. Naomi was no longer sent off to Nana's. Naomi was almost five, and while she obviously missed certain things between Oleander and our mother, she reported quite accurately, "Mommy is learning to hum."

THE FAMILY NEVER CREDITED MY MOTHER, Ilene, with having a deep or subtle intelligence. Perhaps to have done so would have been to acknowledge my father as lacking and in some way unequal to her. Instead, her leaving with Oleander was explained by Nana, my father's mother,

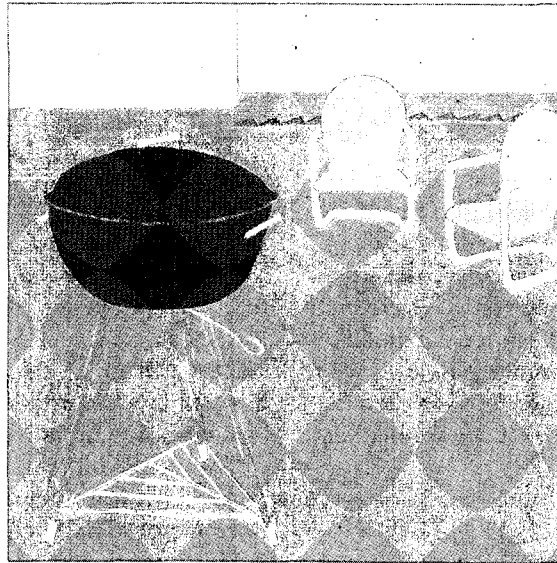
and by the Levys, his tribe of relations, as owing to "Ilene's instability," a condition they attributed to the fact that she was an orphan and a Christian. They had compassion for the orphan and an abiding distrust of the Christian. As for my father, he said surprisingly little about Ilene after she left, leaving to others the observation that normal women did not abandon two young children.

Still, my father must have spoken up at an earlier time, when he had danced and postured and preened in front of Ilene as he followed her from San Diego to Chicago, caught up with her in New York, and finally cornered her in Los Angeles, where he persuaded her to marry him.

At the bottom of my grandmother's closet I once found a cardboard box, tied tight with double-knotted twine. Unwrapping it, I discovered a set of photographs—they looked like proofs—of my parents on their wedding day. My mother was wearing a short ivory dress with long sleeves. Standing slightly behind her was my father, in a dark suit. They were married by a judge in Idaho on January 8. Amazingly, somewhere they had found those most fragile of blooms—gardenias—for my mother's corsage. When I brought the contraband pictures to my grandmother, even she had to admit that my mother looked serenely beautiful, and not crazy.

More than that my grandmother would not say. But Nana's sister, Essie, while teaching me to hem skirts, recited the family catechism on the subject of my parents' coming together. Aunt Essie talked only as long as she sewed, keeping her eyes focused on the material, as if the subject were too difficult to discuss with me eye to eye. Like her neat, even stitches, her words were utilitarian, leaving the texture and shading of events to my imagination.

Aunt Essie took pains not to say anything bad about Ilene, describing her as "a girl with a beautiful head of hair," who met my father "by accident" when he misunderstood some instructions and went to the wrong office for a job interview. Perhaps my mother's stunning hair had somehow fooled him, as my aunt implied. Soon enough my father was serious about the young Ilene, who at sixteen had left the home of her guardian to travel around the country by herself. I was expected to understand how unseemly this was, and how bizarre was her insistence that my father marry her in Idaho and that they live for the first year of their marriage in Oregon, a state forever associated in my grandmother's mind with earth-



quakes, logging camps, and anti-Semitism. A son in Oregon with a Christian wife was not a son. He was an aberration.

My parents left Oregon, and my father worked in eight states in as many months, following my mother, who followed leads and visions in search of better opportunities. No matter how spirited and determined my mother was, my father could not make a go of it, and when, unexpectedly, Ilene became pregnant with me, my father made his one firm, independent decision—to return to his home, New York, and dig in, hoping that Ilene would adjust.

After my parents were divorced and my grandmother moved in with us, my father's marriage took on the status of an errand he had run, the purpose of which everyone had forgotten.

I missed my mother more than I thought I should admit. Naomi suffered most, clinging to my grandmother and sucking her thumb wildly, throwing up every other school day all through first and second grades. I was seven years older and had experienced my mother as she was: moody and remote and, as I pieced it together, as lost among the Levys as they were at a loss with her.

The first few months after my mother left were a time of terrible desolation for Naomi and me and, I suspect, for my father as well. Had he been widowed, the situation would have been cleaner and clearer to everyone. But to be turned aside for Stefan Oleander, a man older and poorer than my father, a man with a glass eye, who gave organ lessons, was to be the object of such seeming irrationality that even I had to wonder if we weren't better off without her.

YEARS LATER, WHEN I WAS A SENIOR IN COLLEGE, I became engaged to an exchange student from Spain. He was bright and handsome, and his family was wealthy. After six months I broke the engagement, for no reason in particular, except that I decided he was no longer as interesting as he had once seemed. When my father heard I'd broken it off, he drove to Boston and took me out to dinner, so that we could talk. Midway through the meal, as I explained how bored I had grown with Valentin, my father pushed away his plate and began smoothing and resmoothing the tablecloth in front of him.

"I once found a stray dog," he said, his palms pressing

flat the already starched linen. "I was seven or eight years old and I had never had a pet. They weren't allowed in our apartment house. But I had always wanted one, so I took it home. Your grandmother took one look at the dog and said that he was sweet but that I couldn't keep him. I pleaded but she didn't budge, so I took him—I called him Skippy—and I hid him in the basement, in a little room next door to the furnace. Skippy was a cute dog, real gentle, and I worried all the time about keeping him cooped up in that stifling hot little room. But I had to have him. I fed him scraps and snuck him out for walks. I led him around with a clothesline. The super didn't discover him, and I was very proud and happy.

"Then one day your grandmother caught me on the street with Skippy and started yelling and screaming that I had to get rid of him. She said if I didn't get rid of him right away, he'd get too attached to me, and then Skippy'd think I was heartless when I finally dumped him. I didn't want Skippy to hate me, so I began looking for someone to take him. All the kids I knew lived in apartments, and they couldn't have dogs either. Finally I told my teacher, Mrs.

Gottlieb, about Skippy, and she said to bring him to her. She had a sister who lived on a farm in New Jersey, and she'd take him.

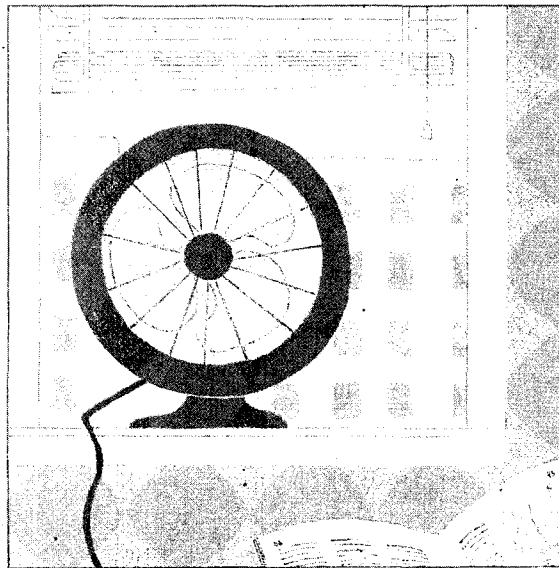
"I'd had Skippy about a month when I turned him over to Mrs. Gottlieb, and she said, 'You can stop crying now.' But I couldn't, and I must have cried for weeks and weeks, I missed Skippy so much. One day I asked her how Skippy was, and she said he'd been killed, run over by a car out there in New Jersey . . ."

"What are you telling me?" I interrupted, cracking an ice cube with my teeth. "Is this like *Citizen Kane* and *Rosebud* or something?"

My father stood up, glaring, his face gone red and then white. I thought for a minute he would slap me.

"The point is"—he was sputtering and hissing—"the point is, the point is, if you want to live with yourself, don't be so fast to turn your back on things."

IT WASN'T AS THOUGH WE NEVER HEARD FROM Ilene. We did, and that made it worse. Afternoons, when Naomi and I got home from school, my grandmother always had a glass of milk and at the very least a box of Mallomars waiting for us. Often aunts and well-meaning neighbors dropped off brownies and



angel-food cakes for us, as though through the application of sweets our loss could be managed.

One day we came home to milk and chocolate-chip ice cream and a record player.

"Your mother sent it," my grandmother said.

"I figured," I said, inspecting the machine, which looked when you closed it up like a little red suitcase. "Did she send a card?"

My grandmother handed me an envelope. "What's it say?" Naomi asked, pulling at my elbow.

I read it over quickly and turned to my sister.

"It says that she's fine and she hopes . . ."

"Not like that," Naomi cried frantically. "Read all the words."

I looked to my grandmother. She was at the window, and she just kept on wiping at the pane's streaky surface with her apron.

"Dear girls," I read aloud. "I hope you will like this phonograph. There are many fine organists, like E. Power Biggs, who I adore, who play like there's no tomorrow. Someday I will send you one of E. Power Biggs's marvelous recordings. Chicago is a great city, full of vigor and vim. I have a small apartment near the lakeshore. I am fine and hope you are too. Be good. Love, Mommy."

Naomi was furiously squishing her ice cream in her bowl. "Eper Bigs is a BM-brain pee-pee face," she said.

ILENE DID EVENTUALLY SEND US SOME RECORDS. FOR a while she wrote to us from Chicago; later she sent us cards from Atlanta, New Orleans, San Diego, and Naples, Florida. Then, after four years of not seeing us, she called one day and said she was in New York. Would we meet her for dinner?

Naomi refused to go, and so my father and I set off on a Thursday evening in June, not sure what to make of Ilene's return or fully aware of what we were going to say or wanted to hear. My father drove into Manhattan over the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge too quickly, leaving behind the safe purposefulness of Queens for the city's bruising impatience, which I mistook for sophistication. As my father searched for a place to park, I thought, not for the first time, how he and I were the wrong combination for this mission. It should have been me alone. Or me and Naomi. Or my father with his two daughters.

My mother sat waiting for us at a table set for six. She was thinner and prettier than I remembered, and her famous hair was hanging loose to her shoulders. She had on a multicolored skirt and a peasant blouse; at her feet was a khaki backpack. My father wore a suit, and cuff links with a matching tie clasp.

We greeted each other with that mixture of discomfort and politeness one reserves for condolences at the casket. Suddenly my mother threw her arms open to me. All I could do was look down at my feet and then, slowly, reach over to shake her hand.

"It's been a long time," she said. "You look so grown up and pretty. I tell people I have a sixteen-year-old daughter, but they don't believe me."

"And a nine-year-old," I reminded her. We shifted in our seats and sipped water. A shaft of light spilled across our table.

"We should eat, maybe," my father said.

"You do the honors, Len," my mother said, pointing to the menu.

My father and I looked at each other.

"What do you like?" he asked her.

"Len, this used to be one of our favorite spots. We came here lots of times. Don't you

remember? I remember."

"You used to come to this place?" I asked. We were in a Greek restaurant on Third Avenue. I had never imagined that my father liked Greek food. He devoted his stomach to meat loaf and boiled potatoes. He thought pecan pie was exotic.

"I haven't been back in years." He was watching Ilene's face.

"Well, then, this is a good place for all of us. I was expecting Naomi and Nana too."

"Look, Mom . . ." For a moment the "Mom" got stuck on my tongue. "We're here because . . ."

"Because we really are family," she interrupted.

"*Family?* Listen, we haven't seen you in years. Naomi's not feeling so happy about that."

"And you?"

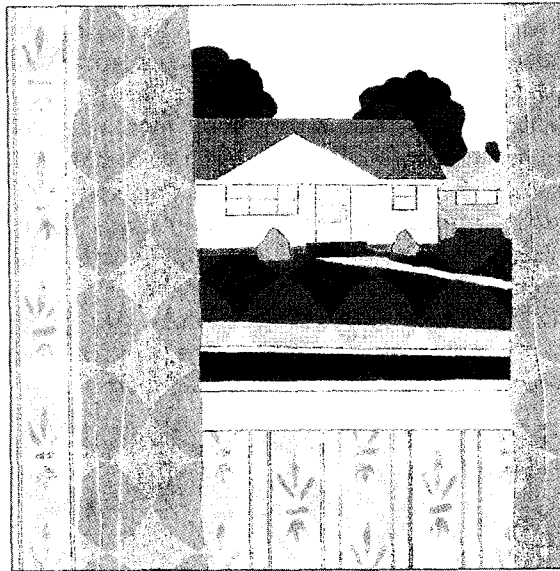
"I think you've got problems."

My father laid his hand over mine, whether in comfort or caution I couldn't tell. "I think you look fine, Ilene," he said.

"I am fine. And, Emogene, I don't have problems the way you think."

"No? Then how come you left like that and started this trek all over the place?"

"It's complicated," she said.



For a few minutes no one spoke, and the waitress began feeding us, placing plates of cheeses and olives and stuffed grape leaves at our fingertips.

"So what happened to Oleander and the organ lessons?" I asked. I thought my tone was conversational, as if we were two old acquaintances catching up on current events.

"He died."

"He died?" My father and I spoke in unison.

"Sort of."

"People don't *sort of* die," I said.

"What I mean is, he died in my heart."

"You mean you left him. Took a walk," I said, noticing how beautiful my mother's hair was.

Again a silence fell on us. My father ordered for himself and Ilene, but I insisted on speaking up for myself. We ate slowly, hardly talking, exchanging bare-bones information. The longer I sat next to my mother, the less connected to her I felt. Her words were about the miles she'd traveled; she had stayed put just long enough for the new to become commonplace. With familiarity came irritation, the signal to move on. Still, she'd been on this journey so long that she was beginning to wear down.

Looking drawn and about to weep, she finally said, "Do you think you could find a place for me at home with you? Is that at least a possibility?"

My father was stunned, and before he could pull himself together, I spoke. "No. No way."

"This is between your father and me," Ilene said quietly.

"Then you two figure it out." I stormed out of the restaurant, and when I realized neither one was going to come after me, I headed home.

In the hours before my father returned from the Greek restaurant, I described to Naomi and Nana all that had happened. They watched me with a silence so chilling that I finally exploded.

"Damn it. Don't just sit there like a couple of rocks. Next time you can go and watch her get all teary and begging."

"Is she coming back with Daddy?" Naomi was shredding the hem of her nightgown.

"How the hell do I know?"

"But they don't love each other anymore. They're divorced," Naomi said.

"It's not love. It's S-E-X," I said, spelling it slowly.

"Emogene," my grandmother cried. "Naomi, they're just talking. Let them talk. Talk is nothing."

THE "NOTHING" TURNED INTO ILENE, WHO APPEARED after midnight on my father's arm. For two weeks she and my grandmother circled each other wordlessly. Naomi and I watched as my father made space for Ilene in his bedroom. They leaned into each other like sweethearts and sat together each evening, watching the television documentaries Ilene had chosen and holding private conversations that drove me to spend hours in my room with Nana, playing canasta.

Periodically Ilene would lock herself in the bathroom and turn on the water taps to mask her sobs. Naomi would stand at the bathroom door, calling out to her until, finally, Ilene would open the door and fall into Naomi's arms, apologizing for everything under the sun. Naomi absolved her every day. Sometimes twice a day.

One morning, a month or so later, my mother did not appear at breakfast. My father explained that Ilene believed things were not going as well as she had hoped. "I told her if that was how she felt, she could leave." And she did. Quietly, without good-byes, in the middle of a July night.

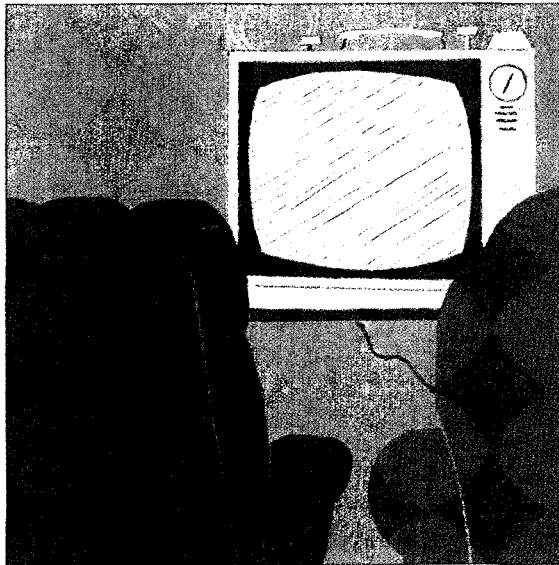
No one asked where she went. Naomi sat, her eyes welling with tears, and I watched my Cheerios grow sodden and inert, barely floating in my bowl.

For a long time I worried about Naomi. I worried for myself, too. In the sixteen years since my mother's final departure, Naomi and I have heard from her only twice. At the time of Naomi's high school graduation Ilene called and said she'd be there to celebrate. But she never showed up. "No problem," Naomi said, when my father tried to excuse Ilene's behavior. Today Naomi, the physics major, devotes herself to devising languages that only computers can comprehend.

We heard from my mother again right before I married. She sent me an electric can opener

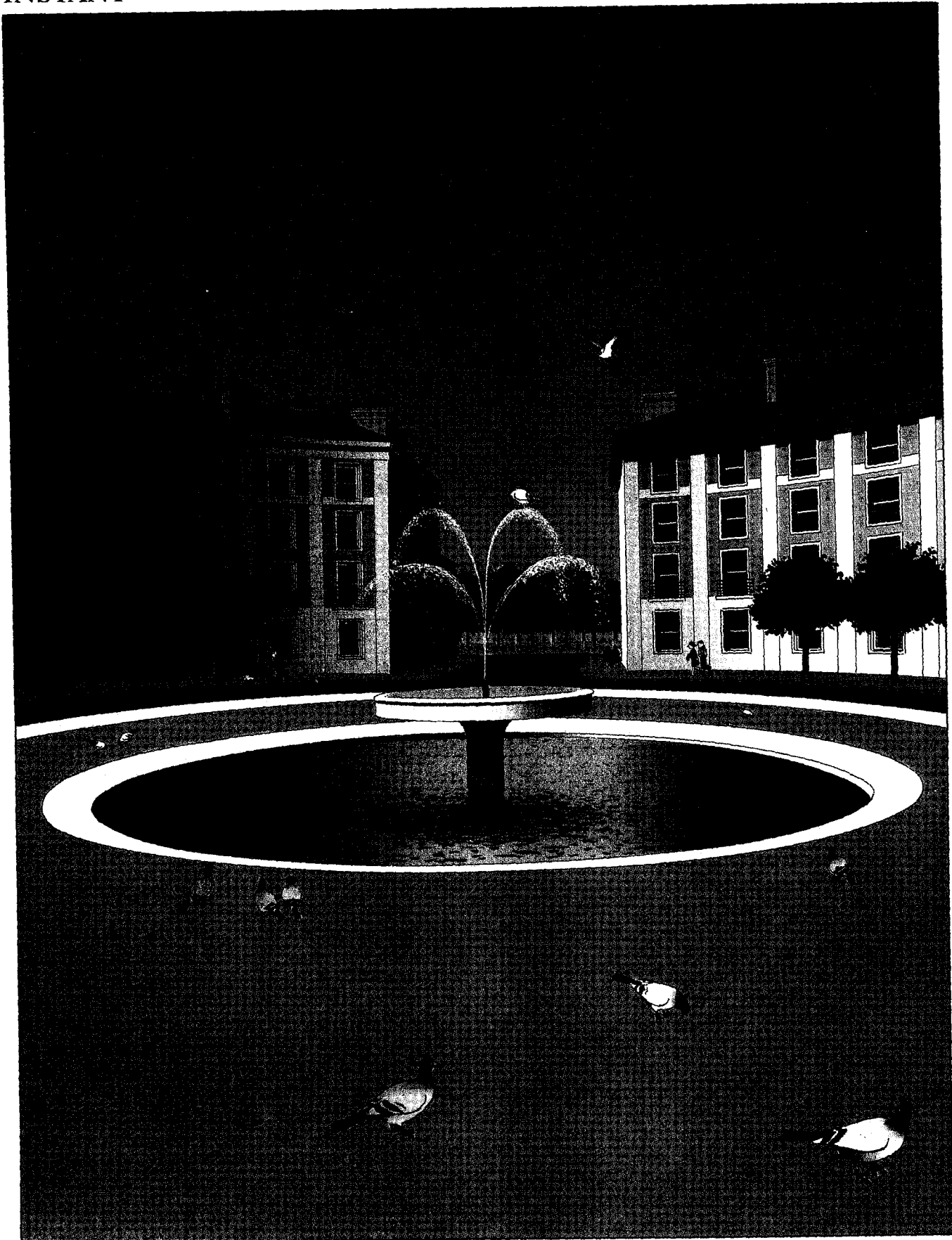
and a note: "Lots of luck in your new life." The can opener was a twin to the one that sat in our Queens kitchen. It was, I believe, my mother's single favorite household appliance, and the only one she ever fully mastered.

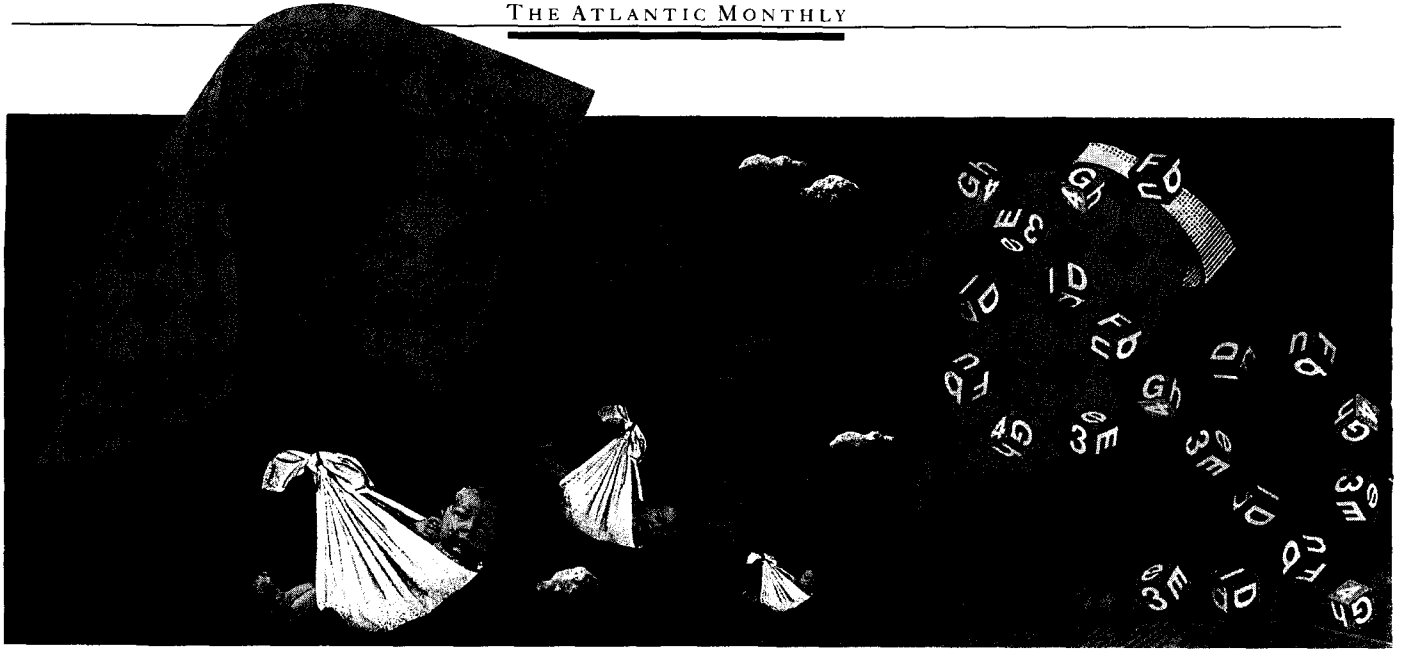
Everyone agrees that I look like my mother. I have her copper-colored hair, heavy and full about my face. My husband says I am calm and predictable, not unlike my father. Still, I feel in me a gnawing restlessness and an unquenchable need to be loved more than anyone or anything else in his world. I cling to him in bed, and when we make love I insist that the room be dark, except for the television, which must be on. □



INSTANT

BY GUY BILLOUT





*When we grow old, we do not depend
directly on our own children. Instead, we depend on other people's children*

KIDS AS CAPITAL

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

Americans like to think of their children as a source of pleasure rather than profit. Recently, when I asked people I know why they had had children, they talked about family values, about the kind of people they want to be, about the kind of world they want to leave behind. The one reason for having children that never came up was economic need.

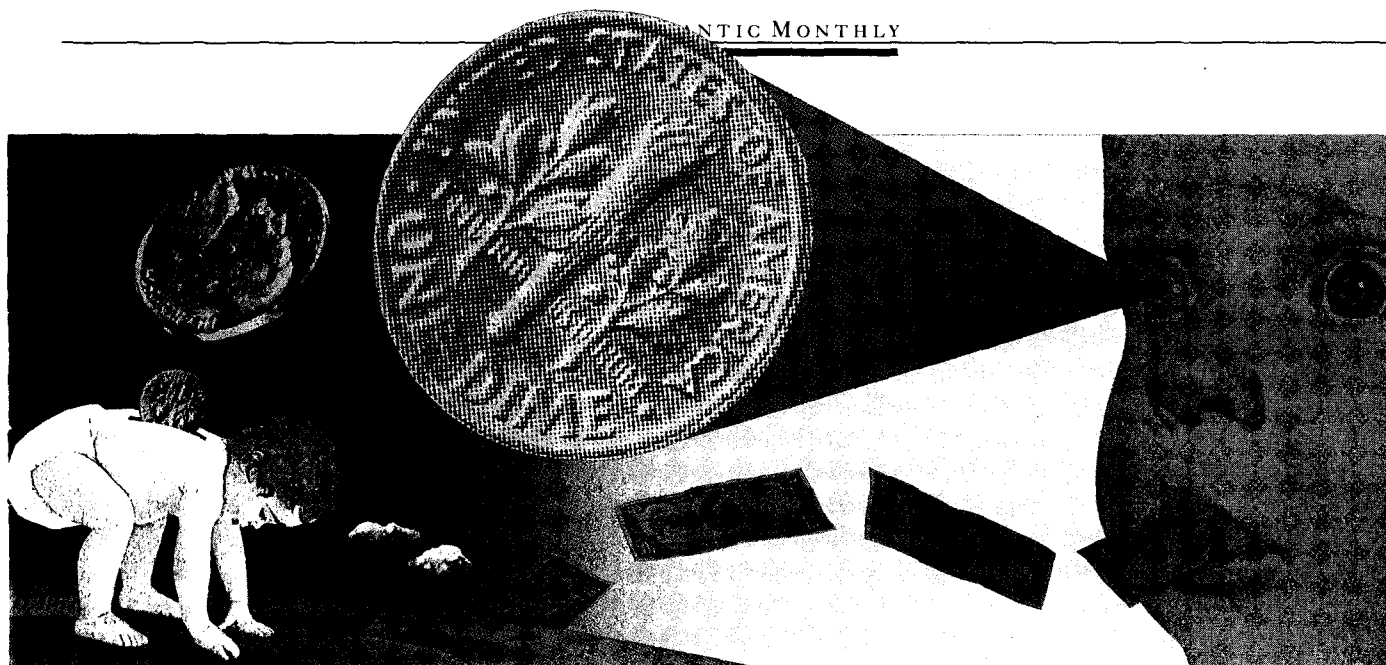
This is a curious thing, when you stop to think about it. Not so many generations ago people had children because they needed them. In those simpler, more agrarian days, a child was an extra set of hands to help support the family. And a child was insurance against being left unsupported and indigent in one's dotage. Earlier cultures didn't have the luxury of thinking of children as strictly a nonprofit venture. And the truth is, we don't either. Socializing many of the costs of old age let us think for a while that we had transcended the ancient economics of family. Now it seems that we were kidding ourselves.

Children are very expensive—in terms of time, career, opportunities forgone, and cash. Thomas J. Espenshade, of Princeton University, has calculated that a middle-class family with two children is likely to spend about \$100,000 to rear each child to age eighteen. And because people today are less likely to have children and the ones who do have children are having fewer of them, the American fertility rate is barely half what it was thirty

years ago, when the Baby Boom was at its peak. Of the children that we do have, a higher proportion have been impoverished in this decade than at any other time since 1965: as of 1987 one in five American children lived in a poor family—this when the economy was strong. Forty-six percent of all black children lived in poverty in 1987; so did 40 percent of all Hispanic children. In New York City 38 percent of the children are poor. Why all this matters to the middle class may not be immediately obvious—which is just the problem. If boys and girls grew up to become industrial machinery instead of men and women, it would be easy to see that everybody had a stake in other people's children.

"Kids are a form of capital," David D. Hale, the chief economist of Kemper Financial Services, in Chicago, told me recently, when I asked him what was behind all the talk about "investing" in children. "There was always an intellectual camp running around saying these things. But suddenly the intellectual camp has a following, out of need." As the sparse generation of the Baby Bust enters the work force, business is discovering that the supply of qualified young workers is tightening.

This same sparse generation will have to undertake the potentially staggering burden, starting early in the next century, of paying the public costs of their parents' dependency. Inexorably, the intergenerational circle closes. Here is a question that every working-age Ameri-



can might do well to ask himself: If we have fewer kids, and if more of the ones we do have are slouching toward adulthood from poverty, then how generously am I going to be supported in my old age?

The past half century has established as a basic principle of American life that we will pay for other people's retirements. Today, as we face the need to nurture our work force and safeguard our retirements, the question forcing its way onto the agenda is how much more we will pay for other people's children. More out of necessity than out of choice, a new redistributive politics is emerging—a politics of redistribution from the childless to the child-rearing.

It is no accident that George Bush, a pro-business, more or less conservative Republican, has proposed a European-style children's allowance. The proposal, a per-child federal subsidy for parents, would help only the poorest and is modest in scale—so modest that many liberals sneer at it, perhaps unwisely. A lot of the critics miss the point. Conceptually speaking, the Bush children's tax credit is a political preview of the next few decades.

The Future Needs Kids

THE NATIONAL "FAMILY," HAVING HAD FEWER children, is going to find early in the next century that its labor force has stopped growing. New entrants into the work force are already becoming a scarce commodity, at least relative to what the country has been accustomed to. Projections are showing that in the 1990s the U.S. labor force will grow more slowly than it has at any time since the 1930s. Fully a third of the new entrants into the work force between now and the turn of the century will be members of minority groups. Those future minority workers are today's minority children—among whom the rates of poverty and illiteracy are highest. On average, poor children grow up to make poor workers. Poor workers generate lower

standards of living for society—and for their old parents. The primordial interdependence of generations ultimately makes itself felt, albeit at the level of the national unit rather than the family unit.

"The two ways that a society provides for its future," Frank Levy, an economist at the University of Maryland, told me, "are its level of physical capital accumulation"—that is, the number and quality of its machines, factories, roads, and so on—"and the number and the quality of its kids. In both cases, you can cheat on the accumulation and, by doing that, raise your current consumption. But eventually it comes back to haunt you."

Right now about one in eight Americans is sixty-five or older. That will start changing fast, as the Baby Boom generation marches in unprecedented numbers across the line between work and retirement. According to projections by the Census Bureau, by late in the 2020s one in five Americans will be sixty-five or older. As the proportion of dependent elderly people in the adult population rises, the number of workers supporting each of them must fall. And that is exactly what is going to happen. The number of working-age people on hand to support each elderly person will drop by almost half, from almost five in 1990 to about two and a half by 2030 or so.

This is a retirement burden whose like no generation of American workers has yet borne. John L. Palmer, of Syracuse University, has figured that the federal tax take will have to rise by an amount equivalent to at least five percent of the gross national product, and quite possibly a good bit more, to cover the health and pension costs of the Baby Boomers' retirement. Today the government takes in about 19 percent of the GNP in taxes. So we are talking about at least a 25 percent federal tax increase.

Economically the burden is probably manageable. The important question is whether it is politically manageable. The country is already moving to raise the retirement age (thus increasing the worker-to-retiree ratio), and it's likely to have to reduce benefits to the elderly



**As the sparse generation
of the Baby Bust enters the
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is tightening.**



somewhat. But cutting benefits is politically inflammatory and, for those affected, personally wrenching. We can ease the need to take either step by making the workers we have more productive, getting more workers, or some combination of the two. For instance, we could save and invest more. That should boost the future productivity of the economy, making the retirement bill more affordable. Or we could import workers. Immigration, which brings new talent and muscle and youth to an aging population, is one of our

richest resources—potentially a major advantage over Japan and the many European countries, like West Germany and France, that are aging even more rapidly than we are and that lack our immigrant tradition.

Unfortunately, in a population as big as ours immigration can do only so much, and it is no substitute for seeing that the native labor force is adequately skilled. As for saving, the trouble is that we're saving less than we used to, not more, as our big budget deficits and low personal savings rates make clear. Besides, the better machines and equipment that we would presumably use our savings to invest in do not look after themselves; they tend to require better workers to run them. Inevitably, then, the discussion comes around to having more children or more-productive children or both—taking steps to replenish the child-capital stock, as it were.

Politicians Need Kids

MANY COUNTRIES HAVE LONG WORRIED explicitly about the number and quality of their children; among the industrial countries, indeed, the United States is an oddity for its lack of an explicit or coherent family policy. Most of our allies and competitors run big redistribution programs to transfer money from people who don't have children to people who do. In some cases the rationale is out-and-out pronatalism: the idea is to get people to have more children, usually for cultural reasons even more than economic ones. France, in particular, has a long tradition of concern about the birth rate. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, when he was the French President, once said, "A society no longer capable of assuring the replacement of generations is a condemned society." Many of the Western European programs that transfer money to families with children began as attempts to buy more chil-

dren, although that goal has often faded away over time and been supplanted by social-welfare concerns.

Eastern Europe, in contrast, remains explicitly pro-baby. Rumania doubled its fertility rate practically overnight after it took measures, in 1966, that sharply curtailed the availability of abortion, divorce, and contraception. (As it turned out, much of the effect was temporary.) Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia took the less intrusive, but very expensive, route of providing big economic inducements to

parents—tax incentives, birth payments, preferential housing programs, paid maternity leave, and so on. According to one estimate, Hungary's inducement package paid more than a third of the costs of rearing children.

Scholars who have examined incentive-based pronatalist programs generally conclude that over the long run they raise the birth rate very little, if at all—no doubt because government inducements of any practical size are overwhelmed by the total costs of rearing children and by considerations of life-style. (How much would the government have to pay you to have a child? Probably more than it could afford to.) "You get a short-run effect mainly in the timing of births," Thomas Espenshade, of Princeton, told me. "The lesson from Europe on these questions has been that governments have a difficult time buying babies, unless they're willing to spend several times more than they've been willing to spend to this point." Fertility rates in Eastern Europe are generally higher than those in noncommunist Europe, but whether that is owing to pronatalism or something else is a mystery.

We Americans come from a different tradition. People here have always viewed the size of their families as a matter of personal rather than public concern. Yet even here some people are calling for outright pronatalism. One of them is Ben J. Wattenberg, of the American Enterprise Institute, a center-right think tank in Washington, D.C. Citing Census Bureau projections that show the U.S. population ceasing to grow by the decade of the 2030s, Wattenberg thinks the government should offer big—very big—per-child tax inducements to parents. "The only pronatalist policy that has any chance of working is serious dollars," he said. He is the first to admit that such a program might not get the birth rate up much. But even if it didn't, he pointed out, it would help solve the child-poverty problem. "If you want to say what's the biggest problem in America, and you want to put it in two

very short words, it's poor kids," Wattenberg said. "The question is, Can you make it easier for young couples who want to have children to be able to have children? You have half a century where the basic drive of this government—properly, in my judgment—was a redistribution of wealth from rich to poor. That isn't going to wash politically anymore. But suppose you say, instead of redistributing from rich to poor, 'Hey, I've got a pro-family program that redistributes money from the childless to the child-rearing.'" That kind of program could get liberals and conservatives on the same side, he said. "It's pro-family and it's pro-kids, and it's pro-poor-kids."

He has a point. The way to get people to have more children is generally the same as the way to relieve poverty among children, which is generally the same as the way to help struggling young middle-class parents: transfer money to families with children. That fact helps account for the broad support in European countries for family-benefits programs. More than sixty countries, including most of the industrial ones, have what are known as family allowances or children's allowances, which typically pay families for each child an equivalent of five to ten percent of the average wage. The benefits may or may not be taxed, but they are generally universally available.

Furthermore, well over a hundred countries, including Canada and countries throughout Europe, give one or both parents cash and time off from work when they have a new baby—typically about four months' paid leave. It's also common for countries to provide preschool or other child care for children three or older; France, Sweden, Italy, West Germany, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Israel, and a number of Eastern European countries do that. All in all, America's transfer payments to children, measured as a percentage of the national output, are less than half those of, for instance, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada.

Generous family benefits have not created any sort of baby boom overseas. But they certainly help account for the fact that child-poverty rates are much lower abroad than here. I asked Sheila B. Kamerman, of the Columbia University School of Social Work, why public benefits for families with children are so generous in Europe and elsewhere. "The concept," she replied, "is that people with children are making a contribution to society, in terms of producing the future labor force and the quality of that labor force, the quality of citizens—even, if you will, financing the social-security system. Children are viewed as a social resource." This is less true in the United States. "The only way families with children have sustained their income in the last fifteen years has been with increased labor-force participation by mothers," Kamerman said. "Families have been putting more and more effort into rearing children, and it doesn't seem to be recognized. And the society is very dependent on those children, ultimately."

In Europe the wide appeal of pro-family policies rests on a convergence of political interests. The right likes programs that support bigger families; the left likes programs that help prevent child poverty. "We may be moving in a similar direction," Kamerman observed. Political pressure is mounting to socialize more of the costs of raising kids—that is, to spread the burden of child-rearing.

Business Needs Kids

IN WASHINGTON YOU CAN HARDLY TURN AROUND these days without hearing about children's and family issues. Liberals are horrified at the high rate of poverty among children, and they understand that the best way to get money to needy families is to point out that these families have needy children. The right, too, is fighting for the pro-family banner. Social conservatives have been worrying for some time about economic and social pressures on the "traditional" family. They are pushing initiatives to come to families' aid. So, it seems, is almost everyone else. You can practically drown under the waves of press conferences and legislative proposals and speeches on children and families.

The social activists have a new and important ally. "In the seventies," Frank Levy, of the University of Maryland, said, "corporations had workers coming out of their ears, so they didn't have to worry about the quality of the work force. They could just discard what they couldn't use. But once you have the labor force growing slowly and you start bumping into scarcity, then you have to assess the quality of the whole work force, because you can't just throw away the bottom quarter or twenty percent. Then you realize that we're all in this together."

Today business is making contact with the sparse generation and finding it lacking. Alan Magazine, the president of the Council on Competitiveness, a Washington-based group whose leadership includes representatives of business, labor, and education, remarked in an interview with me, "We have, in a sense, a ticking time bomb that can't be ignored anymore. Some people have been saying that for years, but now people in the corporations are really seeing it. They're seeing it in the kinds of people they're hiring, the amount of money they have to spend for basic learning to get people up to a level that they can do even menial jobs; they're seeing it in the results of the tests that they give hundreds of people for minimum-wage jobs, and the numbers of people who actually pass those tests."

The past few years have witnessed a redoubling of business's interest in issues relating to children and youth—above all, education, but also day care, child poverty, and so on. When I asked Walter B. Wriston, a former chairman of Citicorp, what accounted for this, he replied flatly, "The reason they're interested in it is, like anybody, self-interest. It isn't that people are more or less sensitive to education; it's that the realization grows that

when a college freshman can't pick out the United States on a map of the world, we've got a problem."

It is no coincidence that pro-business Republicans in Washington are starting to get interested in social issues—not just as "fairness" issues, which Republicans regard as belonging to Democrats, but as "productivity" issues, which Republicans view as their specialty. When business talks, Republicans listen. One morning in his office late last year Senator Pete Domenici—a conservative, pro-business, balance-the-budget Republican who

represents New Mexico—startled me by saying that it's time for the federal government to mount a campaign against what he called "socio-economic drags": the effects of undereducation, drugs, and poverty on the children of the inner cities. "I think these are very, very dangerous things for our economic productivity," he said. "They're not just social issues." We're only going to be hearing more of this kind of talk.

Common Ground?

BUSINESSES CAN ATTEST TO THE FACT THAT transferring resources to families with children doesn't necessarily involve government. Corporations are finding themselves providing more parental-support services to their workers. They have to. Employees with day-care problems lose productive hours, and so the number of companies in this country providing some sort of day-care help has risen dramatically in recent years. A mother who has a premature baby lands her company (if it provides health-care benefits) with big hospital bills, and so companies have started to provide maternal-education programs. New parents need time off from work, and so a growing number of companies, especially large ones, provide paid parental leave. All these services are expensive. Consumers, stockholders, and childless employees pay.

Many liberals like the idea of requiring businesses to assume more of the costs of children—for instance, they tend to favor legislation requiring companies to provide their workers with some form of maternity leave. Conservatives abhor that approach, although they usually aren't quick to suggest an alternative. That is not the only difference between the left and the right. Liberals, who seek to remove obstacles to women's entering the work force, want the government to provide day-care services for parents. Conservatives, many of whom would prefer that women care for their kids themselves, would rather just give parents money (which, in essence, is the strategy of Bush's proposed children's tax credit).

Yet there is much common ground. I recently went to talk to Gary Bauer, the president of the Family Research Council of America, a conservative think tank on family policy and social values. Bauer was President Reagan's domestic-policy adviser for two years, and was known as one of the administration's hard-core social conservatives. When I arrived at his office, the first thing I picked up was a newsletter calling on the federal government to "offer assistance to first-time home buyers." "Home ownership," it complained, "is financially beyond the reach of many young families," and "such families should not have to choose between adopting a two career lifestyle or remaining perpetually propertyless." This is the kind of conservatism that liberal Democrats, who are the long-standing champions of government help for the middle class, ought to be able to cut a deal with.

BARBED WIRE

Two or more strands twisted together,
oxides and baser salts, admixture
of carbon, metal of lash and scourge,
strung like a virus, barbed intervals,

stapled by hand to bois d'arc poles,
woven by machine, "devil's rope"
of vast interior plains,
of meadows bruised by their own

amplitude, barbed wire of a thousand
different kinds, undulating loops,
half round and square—Reynold's Web,
Preston's Braid, Meriwether's Cold-

Weather Wire, Shellaberger's Long Zigzag,
Walking Wire, Curtis' Ladder, Visible Lace,
Arch and Leaf, Descending Beads, Staple Barb,
Open Diamond Point, Sproule's Twins,

Elsy's Ribbon, Brink's Buckle, Ellwood's Star,
Flute and Rib, Spool and Spurs, Joined Saucers,
Tie Through Eye, Body Grip,
Blake's Knee Grip, Underwood's Tack—

unloved, unloving; that to name these
does no political good, but as precision
is polemical, against vague statement
and circular evasion, as the sharp angle of sun

and crossed wires together body forth a spark,
it is some kind—cold, unmusical, utterly itself—
keeping cattle in, or the enemies of sheep
out.

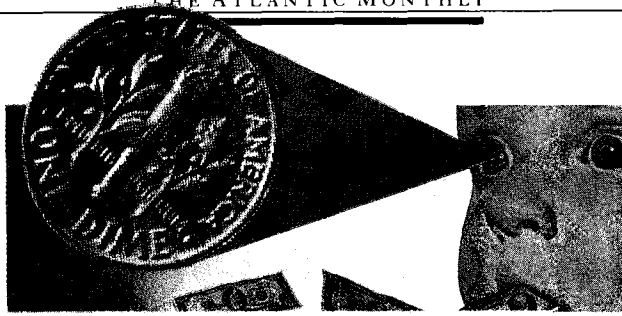
—Ralph Burns

Bauer told me that an important strain of American conservatism has long focused on families, and on the stresses they encounter in trying to meet their responsibilities. "One of the things that astounded me when I was in the administration," he said, "was that from the end of World War Two to the present, the only group in society that really suffered a major increase in taxes, after adjusting for inflation and so on, was families with children"—which, he said, have taken an "incredible hit." In particular, the tax code's personal exemption is the main tax break for dependents. It allows you to subtract from your family's taxable income a certain amount per family member (now \$2,000). In 1948 the exemption was high enough that a typical family with three or more children paid virtually no federal income taxes. Today the personal exemption has been so corroded by inflation that it would have to be more than tripled in order to shield from taxation as large a share of families' income as it did in 1948.

Bauer's group, like many conservative organizations, favors greatly increasing the personal tax exemption, a step that, Bauer argues, would help all families with children, whether the woman chose to stay home or to work. I asked Bauer about per-child tax credits of the sort that many other countries have. "There's some support in the conservative community for the child-allowance approach," he said; but his group is still just considering it.

Never underestimate the ability of liberals and conservatives to overcome their agreements and argue to a standstill. There are profound differences both within and between the left and the right over who should get relief from the high cost of kids (two-earner families or single-earner families or all families? everybody or just the poor?) and in what form relief should be provided (tax credits? tax exemptions? subsidized day care? mandated benefits for employees? cash?). "Both sides have philosophical approaches here that neither wants to concede," Bauer said. "I think there may be an inclination for gridlock for a while longer."

But something will give. Unrest in the middle class will see to that. Today almost two thirds of women with children—and well over half of married women with children under six—are in the work force, whether out of choice or out of necessity (the comparable figures in 1960 were 30 percent and less than 20 percent, respectively). Many of these women and their husbands are financially



Most of our allies and competitors run big redistribution programs to transfer money from people who don't have children to people who do.



numbers of those families runs into a lot of money, fast.

For instance, suppose we raised the personal exemption to \$6,300, so that it would shield as much of families' income as it did in 1948. Each child would then reduce a median-income family's taxes by about \$950 a year, as against about \$300 today. An extra \$650 per child per year wouldn't solve parents' every problem, but it would certainly help. The trouble is that a tax cut of that size would cost the Treasury enough to almost double the federal deficit. Making exceptions or targeting the poor would reduce the cost. But it would also weaken middle-class support, because it would change the issue from making children cheaper for everybody to making children cheaper for the poor—a very different kettle of fish, politically speaking. The unhappy fact is that any program, public or private, that brings substantial relief to middle-class parents is going to be very expensive.

When we discuss spreading through society more of the burdens of child-rearing, we are talking about transferring money from the later part of adulthood to the earlier, and also from those who do not have children to those who do. People with families would get government subsidies during their child-rearing years; then, as they passed into middle age and beyond, they would pay higher taxes to support the younger group coming behind. People without children would simply pay higher taxes throughout life. That is the essence of the new redistributive politics: the middle-aged, the elderly, and the childless would inevitably have to sacrifice more so that young parents would not have to sacrifice so much.

Within families, this sort of spreading of sacrifice between old and young, between those who have kids to support and those who don't, goes on all the time. The problem coming before us today is how to do something similar in society as a whole without tearing ourselves apart politically. □

strained, and they want help with the costs of their kids, and they vote. That, finally, is why President Bush found himself proposing a children's allowance.

Well, who could be against doing more for families with children anyway? The answer is that people who do not have children could be against it, because they would pay the bill. And it is a big bill. According to the Census Bureau, 30 percent of American families with children were getting by on incomes of less than \$20,000 in 1987. To give significant aid to significant

*Three days and three nights
with eight hundred voices and four hundred people*

“HEY, LET ME OUTTA HERE!”

BY CULLEN MURPHY



WHEN I FIRST MET OLLIE, HE WAS BESIDE himself, with his head lying alongside his torso in a wooden box. Jeff Dunham gently lifted the pieces out and helped Ollie pull himself together. When he was seated on Dunham's knee, Ollie opened his eyes, looked at me, furrowed his brow, recoiled, and turned his head to the familiar face on his right.

“Who the heck is that?” he asked Dunham.

Dunham made the introduction, but Ollie would have none of it. “Do you have any idea what time it is?”

Ollie glowered, and his upper lip curled back in a menacing sneer. Dunham handed him to me and said, “Be careful.” I cradled Ollie on my lap and inserted my right hand into his thoracic cavity. The anatomy was unfamiliar, but I depressed one lever and then another and then a third. Ollie turned his head, dropped his jaw, and winked. A moment later his nose lit up bright red. His left eyebrow ascended. He sneered again. I handed Ollie back, and he seemed relieved.

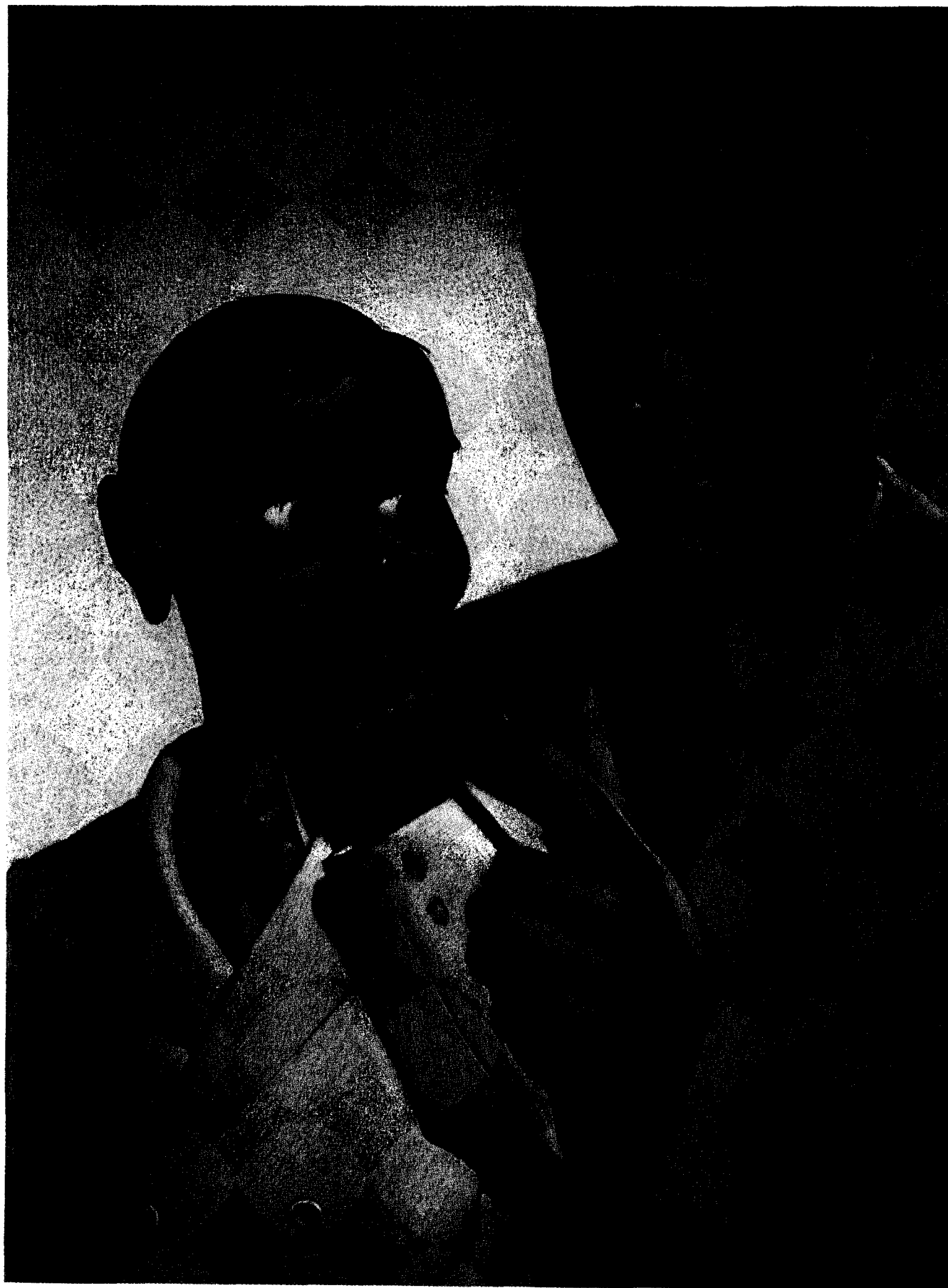
“That was awful,” he said to Dunham. “Don’t ever let him near me again.”

Dunham soothed the little fellow and then returned him to his box. “I’m sorry about that,” he said to me. “Ollie can be temperamental.”

In Ollie’s defense I should note that it *was* late—around midnight on the last day of the International Ventriloquist Convention (the curious orthography derives from the term that “vents” use for one another), which is held every year at midsummer in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky, a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. Dunham, Ollie’s current owner and a rising young ventriloquist, was the

chairman of the convention, and he hadn’t had much free time. I had wanted to see and hold Ollie because he is one of the few figures (vents tend to prefer this term to “dummies,” but they use both) made by the McElroy brothers, Glenn and George, that remain on active duty.

In the 1930s the McElroys produced a series of perhaps a hundred mechanical characters, each of which in the world of ventriloquism enjoys the status of a Stradivarius. During the Second World War, when supplies became scarce, they took jobs at Ivory Soap’s Toilet Goods Model Shop, in Ivorydale, Ohio, and virtually stopped making figures for the rest of their careers (they are now retired). The head of a typical McElroy figure was molded in plastic wood and painted with subtlety and skill. Features that had to be especially pliable—the eyelids, the retractable lips—were fashioned from leather or chamois and grafted imperceptibly onto the head. The mechanical works inside Ollie, which Jeff Dunham exposed by removing a plate in the cranium, resemble a heaping bowl of metallic pasta; they make possible some fourteen movements of the face and head. The wiring, fashioned largely from bicycle spokes, trails down the metal spine upon which the head is impaled to a set of levers that resemble typewriter keys, and it is essentially



by typing that a ventriloquist manipulates a McElroy figure. A few days before I met Ollie face to face, I had seen how Dunham, in performance, made Ollie come alive. Every vent is at home with his own "headstick"; when I tried to manipulate Ollie myself, it was like driving a standard-transmission car with fourteen stick shifts. "Ollie takes some getting used to," Dunham said. "He's more complex than all but a handful of figures. It is such a privilege to work with him."

The world of which Dunham and Ollie are a part was foreign to me until I accepted an invitation to attend the fourteenth annual ventriloquists' convention, last summer, and spent some time in the company of four hundred people who, in the words of one vent, "like to talk to themselves and play with dolls." I was unaware before arriving that ventriloquism, like tap dancing and other vaudevillian arts, is enjoying a considerable popular revival. I had never given more than a passing thought to the vocal, manipulative, and engineering skills that the ventriloquist's illusion requires. And I did not realize the extent to which ventriloquism, like puppetry in general, has swept through evangelical Christianity and become a mainstay of modern ministry.

Three days and nights in Fort Mitchell changed all that: I met a half dozen of the finest ventriloquists in the world. I saw several dozen performances. I spoke to people who make figures and learned some of the basics of their craft. I came home with the makings of a figure of my own, and with the desire to attend another convention when the memory of my initial immersion begins to dim. It hasn't yet.



ANOTHER WORLD

ON THE NIGHT BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE convention there was a performance, which the public could attend for a dollar or two, by Ronn Lucas, one of the most innovative ventriloquists working today. Every seat in front of the stage at the Drawbridge Inn, in Fort Mitchell, where the convention is always held, seemed to be occupied by someone talking to someone else on his lap. In some cases both parties to a conversation were sentient beings, but from the rear of the hall it was hard to tell the children from the dummies.

When Ronn Lucas came out with the figure for which he is most widely known, Buffalo Billy, I realized that I had seen him once with Johnny Carson on *The Tonight Show*. Lucas is young, good-looking, and clean-cut in a midwestern sort of way. He had just gotten married, he told the audience, despite his fiancée's concern that his

lips wouldn't move. Lucas eased gently into the kind of routine that is familiar to anyone who has ever seen a ventriloquist, in which the smart-alecky dummy takes on the increasingly bewildered vent. He demonstrated his command of the distant voice (the voice that seems to come from another part of the room, or over the telephone) and of the muffled voice (the voice that seems to come from inside a trunk or suitcase). Gradually Lucas added new dimensions to his act. In one routine he blew up a balloon while Buffalo Billy sang the ABC song. In another Billy held a figure in his lap and seemed himself to be a ventriloquist, creating an ever-shifting web of real and illusory relationships. Lucas then abandoned his figures and performed for a while with nothing but a sock that he wore on his hand. He discarded the sock and launched into a skit in which the microphone became his interlocutor, its voice tinny and electric and at times seemingly disturbed by interference. Before long the microphone, too, was abandoned, and Lucas performed what can only be described as a ballet, in which his bare hand danced to a strange music that the hand itself seemed to be producing. The music culminated in a high-pitched and steady whine, as if from a tuning fork, and it seemed to come from a spot Lucas pointed to on his palm. He turned the palm to the audience and the whine became louder. He turned the palm away and the whine became softer. He held his palm flat and the sound steadied for a moment, and then began slowly to fade. Before the sound could fade away completely, Lucas abruptly closed his hand, and there was silence. The people in the hall made no move to applaud for five or six seconds, as if applause were too blunt and bestial a response to what they had just seen. I clearly wasn't the only one in the room whose rapture was tarnished by envy.

If a genie appeared and offered you three wishes, you probably wouldn't use one to become a ventriloquist. But if you happened to wake up one day with a ventriloquist's skills, you probably would admit that something wonderful had happened. Ventriloquism is a talent that almost no one would mind having. I remember advertisements in comic books for ventriloquism lessons which showed a big guy, maybe a sailor, carrying a trunk on his back, and from the trunk came the plaintive cry, "Hey, let me outta here!" A little kid with a devilish grin was shown standing nearby. I never clipped the coupon and sent in money, but the ad has always stuck in my mind, emblematic, perhaps, of a career path too early forsworn.

If I had followed that path, however, there would be a few things I could say about myself by now. I would probably be an alumnus of the Maher Ventriloquist Studios, which turns out as many as four hundred vents a year, and which, incredibly, conducts all its classes by mail. I would have invested \$1,000 or more in the figures I now used, which I would carry around in a trunk. I would have publicity photographs on my person at all



FROWNING CHARLIE (McCARTHY), CREATED BY BILL WALLACE, 1945

times, and they would show me mugging for the camera with my dummy, wearing the expression you see in every picture of Willard Scott. I would be disliked by stand-up comics, who find distasteful the use of a “prop,” and who also frequently bomb when they have to follow vents. I would wear Hawaiian shirts on inappropriate occasions. And no matter what kind of ventriloquist I was, I would show up at the International Ventriloquist CONVENTION at least once every couple of years, because going there is good for art and good for business.

The International Ventriloquist CONVENTION is on one level a professional meeting like any other. There are lectures and workshops, a business meeting and an awards banquet, an exhibition hall and a hospitality suite. And there is a lot of shoptalk. Ventriloquism is a diverse endeavor with far-flung practitioners, and the convention is the one place where everyone can catch up with what’s happening in the profession. Nobody can do better than guess at how many people work as professional ventriloquists in the United States, but the number of people coming to the convention increases every year. Keeping vents supplied with dummies provides work for about fifteen small businesses in this country. And ventriloquism, which nearly died when vaudeville did, has moved into many new arenas.

Clinton Detweiler, who owns the Maher Ventriloquist Studios and is the editor of the newsletter *Newsy Vents*, and who seems to spend most of his spare time figuring out ways to incorporate mouths that can open and close

into plastic fruit and neckties and watering cans and other items around the house, sat me down one afternoon at the convention and drew a pie chart. “I don’t know how many vents altogether are in this pie,” Detweiler said, “but if you had to divide them up percentagewise, it would look something like this. About five percent would be your stand-ups, working in places like Atlantic City, Chicago, and Las Vegas, or on cruise ships. Another twenty percent do mainly programs in schools—you know, for drug education and that sort of thing. And another twenty percent are part-time vents who do community-type shows and shows at parties. Maybe ten percent are teachers or doctors or lawyers or psychologists who use dummies in their work. And maybe five percent are people in business who’ll use a dummy for seminars and whatnot, and probably another five percent are vents in ways I haven’t thought of. We’ll call that ‘other.’ Another twenty percent are hobbyists. And then you have your gospel vents, who make up at least a quarter of the pie and probably more, and that share is growing.” Detweiler looked down at the pie. “So that comes to a hundred and ten percent. Well, there’s some overlap, I guess.”

A woman approached with a toy duck and asked Detweiler if he could find a way to give it a working mouth, and he said to leave it with him for a while and he’d see if he could rig one up, maybe with a clothespin. When the woman left, Detweiler said, “I spend a lot of time in grocery stores looking for things I can put mouths on. Generally the cereal aisles and the detergent aisles are the best, but in fact you’ll find things almost anywhere you look. That’s my problem.”

The dealers’ room is the heart of the convention, where most of the socializing occurs, and I walked around it one night for several hours. Dummies of all kinds, old and new, lay out on tables: drunks, dogs, and dons, grandmothers and goons, sailors, leprechauns, bullies. There was a Vietnam-veteran dummy in a wheelchair. The heads of many of the antique dummies were open to expose the works, and the cranial plates lay upturned beside the heads like ashtrays. Ventriloquists mingled among the stalls with their figures on their arms. The figures tended to greet one another in the aisles. Behind my back someone said, “That’s the most beautiful ventriloquist’s figure I’ve ever seen.” Someone else said in reply, “Shari Lewis has the most beautiful ventriloquist’s figure I’ve ever seen.” Some dealers had small libraries for sale. The books bore titles like *Something Punny* and *Knock Em Dead* and *Conquering Stage Fright*. At Clinton Detweiler’s table you could buy *Shredded Wit*, a book of jokes on cereal themes. One dealer showed me a collection of English music-hall routines. “If you really want a weird act, get one of these. It’s all ‘bloody’ this and ‘bloody’ that.” He was also selling Charlie McCarthy spoons from the 1930s and yellowing original scripts from *The Paul Winchell Show*. A dealer nearby was offering, for

\$200, a suit that had once been worn by Mortimer Snerd. Two seven-year-olds walked past me with dummies perched on their forearms. One of them said to the other, "So how long you been a vent?"



THE UNDEAD

THE INTERNATIONAL VENTRILOQUIST CONVENTION is held in Fort Mitchell because that is the home of the Vent Haven Museum, which houses the largest collection of ventriloquist's figures in the world. The museum was opened to the public (by appointment) in 1973, after the death of William Shakespeare Berger, who was a president of the Cambridge Tile Company, in Cincinnati, an amateur ventriloquist, and a collector of ventriloquial materials: not only figures and puppets but also books, photographs, scripts, recordings, films, and wood-carving tools. The museum was initially confined to Berger's red-brick Victorian home. (Berger had arranged his figures so that they looked out all the windows, until local residents complained.) By now the museum has spilled over into a refurbished garage and two other buildings. I was shown around Vent Haven one afternoon by Don Millure, who is a trustee, and his wife, Dorothy, who is the curator. Nine McElroy figures are on view, including one, named Kenny Talk, who can smoke a cigarette and blow the smoke out his ears. Harry ("The Great") Lester's Frank Byron, Jr., is there, and Valentine Vox's Cecil Wiggle-nose. There is a replica of Edgar Bergen's Charlie McCarthy, and of Paul Winchell's Jerry Mahoney. Farfel, the dog figure that Jimmy Nelson used in his famous series of Nestlé's Quik commercials, peers down from a shelf with heavy-lidded eyes; actually, this Farfel is the original Farfel's stunt dog—the one that would get shot out of a cannon and do other dangerous deeds. In one room, on row after row of folding chairs, an audience of perhaps a hundred figures sits with open eyes and vacant smiles. The effect of this grouping is overpowering.

There is something surreal and ghastly about a ventriloquist's dummy. In its life on stage it serves as a source of entertainment, but in its private life, we all know, it is an all-too-willing slave of dark forces—a characteristic displayed in movies like *Dead of Night* (1945) and *Magic* (1978), and in television programs like *The Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*. At the Vent Haven Museum there are some six hundred of these beings, clustered together in mobs of sixty to a hundred or more. Some of them have human hair or teeth. Virtually all their masters are long since dead, yet here sit the dummies, intact and immortal, though torn forever from their original voices. One

dummy on display was found amid the rubble of a German house destroyed during the Second World War. Four others, from the turn of the century, were washed ashore after a shipwreck, the only survivors. On the walls arrangements of photographs show the great ventriloquists of yore getting older and frailer; the agelessness of their partners seems to mock them. A ventriloquist who came to the museum with me pointed out a certain figure and said, "The first time I saw him sitting there, I nearly broke down. He belonged to a friend who had just died in an accident." A visitor to Vent Haven whose thoughts do not somehow touch on death is probably not human.

The association of ventriloquism and death has a historical basis. Some figures at Vent Haven go back 175 years, and the books there about ventriloquism go back even further, but the origins of the art itself lie deep in antiquity. Necromancers, who advertised themselves as the living vessels through which the spirits of the dead could speak, apparently were able to transmit aperçus from the underworld without labial agency. There is archaeological evidence for this from Egypt and Palestine, and literary evidence from all over. (The biblical story of the Witch of Endor, in Samuel, is thought to involve a ventriloquist.) Up through the Middle Ages ventriloquism remained a tool of those with avowed ties to the supernatural. Elizabeth Barton, the so-called Holy Maid of Kent, professed such ties when, in a trance-like state and with no visible movement of her mouth, she suggested to Henry VIII that divorcing Catherine of Aragon would not

YAHOODIE, CREATED BY BILL NELSON, 1987



be such a great idea. The suggestion was itself not such a great idea. Barton was hanged at Tyburn in 1534.

Not long afterward, of course, came that famous sea change in Western civilization when the realm of the spirit was invaded by scientists and entertainers. No one really knows who first established himself as a professional vent, but by the nineteenth century ventriloquists were fairly common. They usually didn't use dummies, however, but entertained their audiences through exhibitions of the distant voice. This minimalist approach, whose effect can be dazzling, is one that some of the best modern ventriloquists take during portions of their acts. The use of mechanical figures was popularized in the late-nineteenth-century English music hall, where ventriloquists generally used not one figure but a whole family of them, often affixed to a bench: a blackamoor, a sailor, an old woman, a clown—the combinations varied. The first man to become well known for using a single figure seated on his knee was Fred Russell, an English ventriloquist who flourished in the 1890s. A triumphal tour of the United States at the turn of the century by Arthur Prince, another English vent who used a single figure, made ventriloquism wildly popular in this country and shaped its contours for years to come. Harry Lester, who saw Prince perform, made his debut in 1902 and became the premier American vent of the vaudeville era. It was The Great Lester who taught Edgar Bergen (a \$300 check from Bergen to Lester for lessons is on display at Vent Haven), and it was Bergen who led the way out of vaudeville and into broadcasting, inspiring Winchell, Nelson, and others. The example of Winchell and Nelson, in turn, helped draw in the generation that is now achieving prominence, on television (especially cable) and in clubs—people like Lucas, Dunham, Jay Johnson, Alan Semok, and Willie Tyler.

Why, I asked Dorothy Millure, do so many ventriloquists' figures tend to look alike? She said, "That's a legacy from the old days too. There used to be a stock character in vaudeville, the wisecracking Irish kid, and ventriloquists, who worked vaudeville, realized early on that this was the perfect sort of foil. That's why your typical figure has a black-Irish look and a name like Danny O'Day or Jerry Mahoney or Charlie McCarthy. Of course, that's all changing. You've seen the dealers' room. In thirty years the people in the museum"—I raised an eyebrow—"will be a lot more diverse." One major trend is toward the use of soft figures, made of cloth or foam. The classic hard figure with a headstick will always be popular, but soft figures are within the financial reach of more people—especially young people—than hard figures are. They are also simpler to manipulate: you can use your hand directly to move the mouth and face, rather than having to negotiate a headstick. The advent of soft puppets is often cited as among the contributing factors in ventriloquism's resurgence.

I had dinner after my tour of the Vent Haven Museum with a Chicago-based vent and figure-maker named John Arvites. Like a number of prominent vents, Arvites acquired his skills not through schooling but at the side of a "great man" (in this case, Frank Marshall). One of Arvites's primary figures now is a hard dummy of a wizened black man named Little Charlie, who is supposed to be more than a hundred years old. Arvites is white. I brought up the subject of the ventriloquist's dummy's evolving form, and he said, "Some things have changed. Vents now tend to use mixed styles of puppets. There also are some things that don't change. People will listen to a figure more readily and attentively than they will listen to a real person. The psychology is strange. You can say things through a puppet that the audience would never accept from you yourself. Whether I'm in a blues club on the South Side of Chicago with old Charlie, at a corporate banquet with Fred the Guy, or in a school with Terry—in any of these situations any of my characters can say things that the audience will think are delightfully funny, but if I had said them myself I'd get killed for it.

"Your characters are tools, instruments with which you communicate. The key is to create an illusion of life. It's a game of make-believe in which you act as if the puppet actually had a life of his own. You'll find yourself being surprised by things that the figure says—things you would never think of saying yourself."

Ventriloquists don't really regard their figures as beings with an independent existence, but watch a vent put his dummy down and you'll see that he never just throws him on a table or into a trunk. He almost always sets him down gently, in a chair. I heard a story from Jimmy Nelson. He was taping a show for television, and the script involved Nelson, the dummy Danny O'Day, the dummy Farfel, and Nelson's wife. Everything went fine until it was Danny O'Day's turn to speak. "I remember looking at him," Nelson said, "and thinking, C'mon, the lines aren't that hard. But he didn't say a word. My wife had to kick me."



A TECK OF TICKLED TETTERS

WHEN I SAID EARLIER THAT VENTRILOQUISM was a career path I had forsworn, I wasn't quite telling the truth. Any time I have a puppet on my hand and a child on my knee, something compels me to become a not-so-great Lester. Anyone can be a successful vent when the audience consists of a single three-year-old and when the words to be said are easy ones, like "Hey, guys!" or "Are you a duck?" But when the situation calls for you to say some-

thing like "Shut up and listen, you bloody fool," even a three-year-old will catch your lips moving. This is because *p*, *b*, and *f*, together with *m*, are the Scylla, Scylla, Scylla, and Charybdis of ventriloquism, and doom most passing lips.

I sat down for a cup of coffee one afternoon with Bob Isaacson, a ventriloquist who lives in Oak Park, Illinois, and asked how a ventriloquist makes the *b* sound. Isaacson said, "Well, some books will tell you to substitute a *d* sound, but I found when I was just learning that that doesn't quite make it. 'How about a dottle of deer?' Or some will say to use a *v* sound. 'How about a vottle of veer?' When I first started, I remember thinking, This isn't very good. This isn't very good at all. I started thinking in my mind a combination of *d* and *v*. An exaggerated version would be, 'How advout a dvottle of dveer?' And I just kept trying it over and over again, trying to slide the sound out. And eventually it came to sound like 'How about a bottle of beer?' 'How about some beer and some baked beans?' See, that wasn't bad. Of course, you get the *b* down and you still have the other hard ones to master. The most common substitution for *p* is a *t*. 'Do you want to buy a tickle for a nickle?' 'Teter Titer ticked a teck of tickled tetterers.' Sometimes a *th* works better. 'How about a thickle?' 'How about a pickle?' 'A thickle.' 'A pickle.' That's not too bad. Again, it depends on how you slide that sound out. It's almost a slurring kind of thing. Some people use an *f*. 'A fickle.' 'A pickle.' I'm kind of blowing the sound past my lips."

Isaacson went through the other tough sounds. The extraordinary thing about our conversation was that during most of it Isaacson never moved his mouth. From three feet away I was aware of the expulsion of air, and of tense undulations in the muscles of Isaacson's neck, but that was all. I went back to my room and began to practice what I had just learned, bearing in mind the exhortatory mantra in Paul Winchell's *Ventriloquism for Fun and Profit*: "Don't rush. Don't get impatient. Don't get dis-

couraged. Don't ever give up." I gave it a good fifteen minutes. Then I got impatient and discouraged, and gave up. I went out and bought a dottle of deer.

People like me, who aren't in the business, tend to think that making the hard sounds without "flapping" ought to be just about enough to qualify you as a real ventriloquist, but in fact it only makes you eligible, much as being male makes you eligible but not qualified to be a Catholic priest. Vents do kid around about the oral tricks they resort to—I was introduced to the ventriloquist Colonel Bill Boley by a vent who called him Dill Doley—but they don't pretend that letter substitutions, however skillfully voiced, are more than a small part of the illusion. One night I saw a boy with a gorilla dummy on his arm go up to one of the bigger names in ventriloquism. I heard the gorilla say, "Hi, friend, my name is Big Boy." And the older vent said, "That's pretty good, son. But how's your distant voice? How's your muffled voice?"

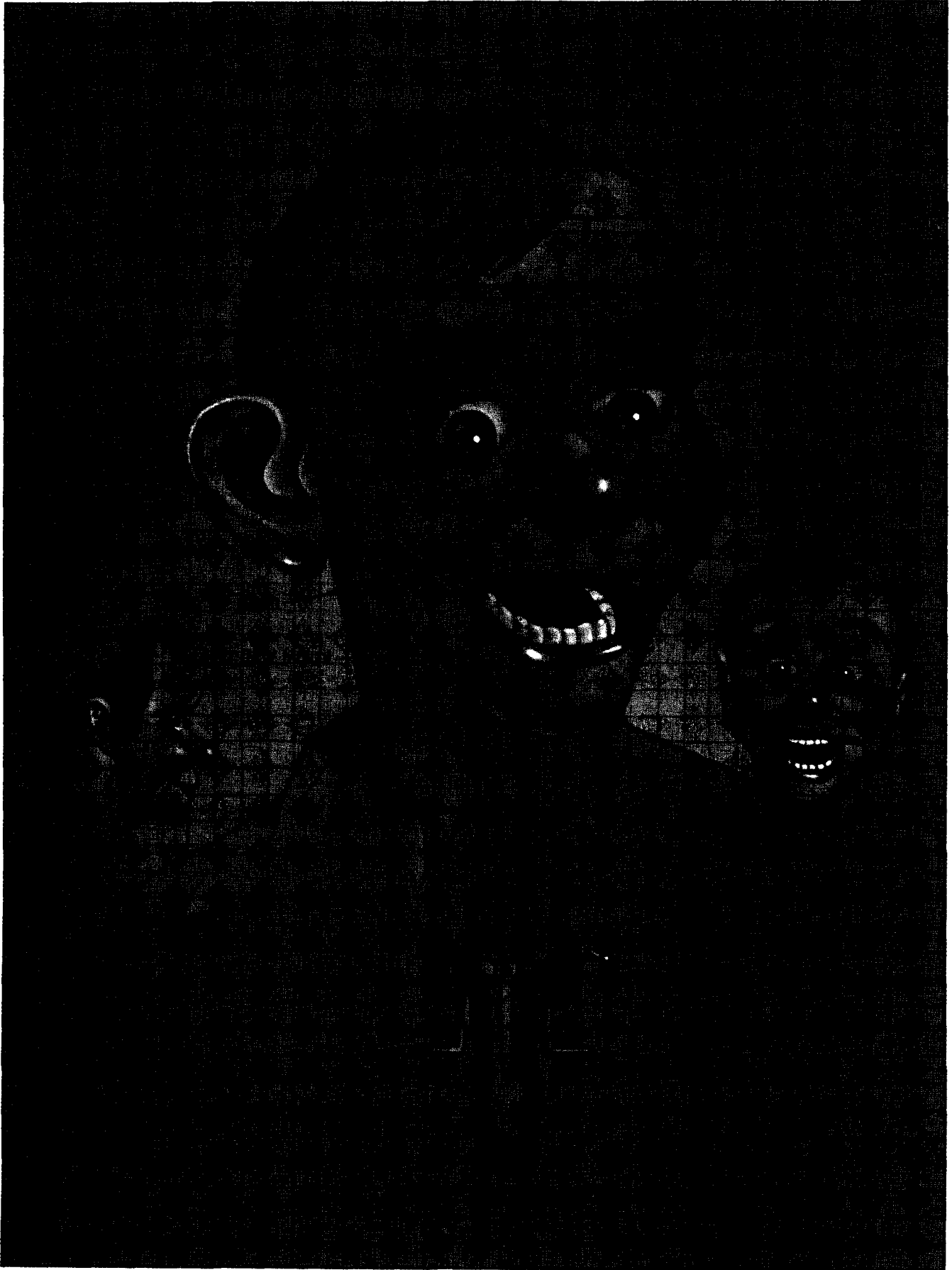
I sat in on a good many seminars at the convention—how to survive a kids' show, constructing a foam-head puppet, putting mouths on things—and one of the most memorable, conducted by a vent named Nacho Estrada, was devoted to the distant voice. You are likely never to encounter Estrada unless you are in high school or grade school and live in the Southwest. He goes from one school district to another, cutting deals with superintendents here and there, and offering funny but serious programs about all the familiar touchy subjects. He limbers up his larynx while driving to shows by singing the famous refrain from "Witch Doctor": "Ooh, Eee, Ooh-ah-ah, Ting-tang, Walla-walla Bing-bang." Estrada is esteemed among his peers for his mastery of the distant voice.

He explained in his seminar that a voice from a distance was different from the regular "vent voice," that the individual words had to be drawn out longer—"Heeeey, Joeceey"—and that the voice had to lose much of its body and texture, becoming forced and tiny. "You have to talk from your stomach," he said. "Or like the way you would talk just after somebody punched you in the stomach." (The word *ventriloquism* comes from the Latin for "talking from the stomach.") But then Estrada went on to say that voice technique was never enough by itself, that voice can't give itself a false source. He had performed a routine at the seminar in which his dummy was in a trunk whose lid he kept raising and lowering, and the dummy's voice, which seemed to be coming from the trunk, was modulated accordingly in loudness, pitch, and sonority. Or so it seemed to me. Estrada said, "There's no such thing as throwing your voice. Your voice has to come out of your mouth, because that's where it comes out of. Fortunately for us, the ear isn't a very reliable organ. It doesn't always know where a sound is coming from. It will associate itself with any visual cue that happens to be around. If a sound suddenly sounds muffled when I'm closing the trunk, people think it's happening because I'm closing the trunk. If I didn't have

MATERIAL

At fourteen, parked	in—shapes of paint
by the depot	flecks, dimensions;
in the Chevy	wood-grainy, rain-
pickup with its	smudged, deep-textured
motor running,	lumps and fadings:
she studies flaked	Concentration
B&M paint	upraises things,
on clapboard and	like bread, or grass
takes all edges	after warm rain.

—Donald Hall



a trunk, they'd probably think I was just lowering my voice."

Any vent will tell you that manipulation and the figure's personal character are as important as the vent's voice in the success of an act. I had several conversations at the convention with Alan Semok, who is a figure-maker and actor, and a very successful vent. Semok's first dummy was given to him when he was a child, to help him overcome his shyness, which is a story that not a few vents tell. (Another story vents sometimes tell is that they were given their first dummy for companionship during a serious childhood illness.) Semok had this to say about manipulation: "When you look at a lot of beginner vents you notice that their voice is fine but their figures are dead. Basically it's just the mouth that's moving. And the vent winds up having this magician problem, where the audience spends all its time looking at *him*, wondering if he's going to slip up. The audience is supposed to be more interested in the dummy. Edgar Bergen had terrible lip control—actually, it was good at first but deteriorated after he worked in radio—and nobody cared, because Charlie McCarthy was just so real."

I have seen Semok's point borne out twice. The first time was when I was a child, and saw Paul Winchell and Jerry Mahoney do a show that was a spoof of a Charlie Chaplin short, and had no spoken words. It must have been entrancing, because the memory is still vivid and I was only four or five. The second time was at the convention, when Jeff Dunham performed one night with a dummy of sour mien made by the figure-makers Bill Nelson and Chuck Jackson. (Nelson did the paintings that accompany this article.) Dunham's manipulation, perfected on the daunting machine that is a McElroy, can be exquisite, and the dummy he was manipulating that night was unusually expressive to begin with. For fifteen minutes the dummy, which looked vaguely like François Mitterand, drew laughter with little more than an occasional grunt, a raised eyebrow, a disgusted turn of the head. "Something must be wrong," Dunham said later, "when you can get by in an act without your figure having to talk." He was being too modest.



ONWARD CHRISTIAN FIGURES

CONTESTS ARE HELD THROUGHOUT THE INTERNATIONAL Ventriloquist CONVENTION, for juniors and seniors, and prizes are awarded for distant voice, manipulation, and originality. One night I saw a boy of ten standing in the hallway, with a typical Irish-kid type of dummy on his arm and his mother bending over him. He was in tears, because he had arrived late



CECIL WIGGLENOSE, CREATED BY THE MCELROYS IN THE 1930S

and missed his chance to compete in the juniors. On the next night the convention officials interrupted the senior competition and gave the boy his turn.

He came out on stage dressed in immaculate white, and with the confident presence that very young people sometimes have, not being aware yet of all the good reasons for falling to pieces. His dummy, it seemed, had been lonely of late, didn't have any friends. "You always have a friend," the boy told him. "No, I don't have any friends," the dummy insisted. "Yes, you do," the boy said. I didn't have to wait long to find out where this routine was leading. A few moments later I heard the dummy say, "Jesus? I don't know any Jesus." And off it went. When the boy finished, he slid from his stool and sang, in a high, clear voice, without accompaniment, a hymn. About half the people in the audience rolled their eyes and clapped dutifully, and about half gave the boy an authentic ovation.

You don't notice them at first, because the more pungent aspects of the art, such as dummies and disembodied voices, tend to make a more forceful initial impression at the convention, but gospel vents are a growing force in ventriloquism. Clinton Detweiler estimates that 50 to 70 percent of the people taking courses from the Maher Ventriloquist Studios intend to use their talents for church work. In the dealers' room a good number of stalls offered a selection of materials of a plainly Christian provenance, such as a *Treasury of Clean Teenage Jokes* and *Gospel Ad-Vent-ures*. I was struck at the convention by how

inoffensive the humor was in general, and eventually learned that this was the result of a tacit compromise between the gospel vents and the others. Some friction had been growing between the two groups as the presence of gospel vents at the convention became increasingly pronounced. Tensions were eased when the gospel vents began to do less "witnessing" on stage and to use the convention mostly to exhibit their secular material. (They can strut their gospel stuff at the annual convention of the Fellowship of Christian Puppeteers.) The other vents, in turn, tried to bear in mind that they weren't in Las Vegas.

I had dinner with Dale and Liz VonSeggen, who direct the Puppet Ministry of the Denver First Church of the Nazarene, and after Liz had blessed our food, she said, "You don't get much of an inkling at first that people like us are here. Several years ago there was an attempt to run two separate programs, one for club performers and one for Christian performers. A decision was reached after that to combine our efforts. A lot of the evangelicals now tend to pull back and cross over to mainstream vent routines. But we come because this is the greatest gathering of ventriloquists in the world, and it's the only place you can go where everyone understands your artistic needs." Dale VonSeggen said, "You probably think puppet ministry is a little strange, but puppetry has been associated with religion for a long, long time. The word *marionette* means 'little Mary' and comes from the Middle Ages, when Christmas plays would be performed with puppets. Then puppetry was thrown out of the church, and it stayed out for a long time." It was accepted back by the Protestant churches in the nineteenth century and received a great impetus in the 1970s, with the popularity of *Sesame Street*. "We figured," Dale said, "that if you could use figures to teach the ABCs you could use them to teach John 14:6." An enterprise called Puppet Productions, in San Diego, sent teams around the country, mostly to fundamentalist churches, to set up puppet ministries for children. Demand grew rapidly, and Puppet Productions eventually branched into programs aimed at combating drug and alcohol abuse. The ability of a puppet or a dummy to command attention, compel confidence, and force a message through is difficult to counter. Puppeteers and ventriloquists are now routinely used to elicit testimony from children who have been beaten or sexually abused and who won't talk to an adult. But church work is by far the largest nontheatrical outlet for ventriloquism. Liz VonSeggen received her first dummy, a Danny O'Day replica from a mail-order catalogue, in 1964. The VonSeggens now rule a small empire. When I spoke to them, they were about to embark on an eight-city cross-country tour with their evangelical troupe, called Victory in Puppetry. They conduct a week-long Children's Ministries University every summer, attended by two hundred people.

Gospel ventriloquism has made at least one small in-

road into an older faith. Jonathan Geffner, who was my pick to win the seniors competition (he came in second), started out as, in his words, "the Jewish equivalent, I guess, of the gospel vents." Geffner, an intense young man, has a master's degree in piano from the Manhattan School of Music. He turned to ventriloquism in part because he was having trouble making a living in the concert hall. He began using ventriloquism in classes he teaches in Hebrew school, and his Jewish-theme programs soon became popular in temples, community centers, and schools throughout the New York area. He now performs a wider range of material. I asked Geffner what he especially liked about being a ventriloquist. He thought for a minute and then said something I had been told in various ways by other vents: "Well, there's the whole element of not having to rely on another human being."



THE VENTRILOQUITIC OATH

"I DON'T KNOW—MAYBE IT'S THE ELEMENT OF miracles," Ronn Lucas said when I asked him why there are so many evangelical ventriloquists. "Maybe they read about Moses talking to the burning bush and it gives them ideas. This is one of those unanswerable questions. Why are so many famous ventriloquists left-handed? Why do a disproportionate number seem to come from Texas? I don't know the answer to those questions either."

Lucas was relaxing in his suite, dressed in a jumpsuit. I asked Lucas if ventriloquists have a code they live by, and he laughed and said, "You mean a Ventriloquitic Oath?" He thought for a while. "There are some things that generally aren't done," he said. "The vent's voice has to be his own and it has to be live or at least appear to be. And the figure on his knee is traditionally something he manipulates, not a real person. But there are always legitimate exceptions, and there's room to stretch. There's a lot that can be done with electronics, for example, to change the character of your voice or enable you to manipulate a figure from afar. It's inevitable that ventriloquism will branch out into holograms and liquid-crystal displays.

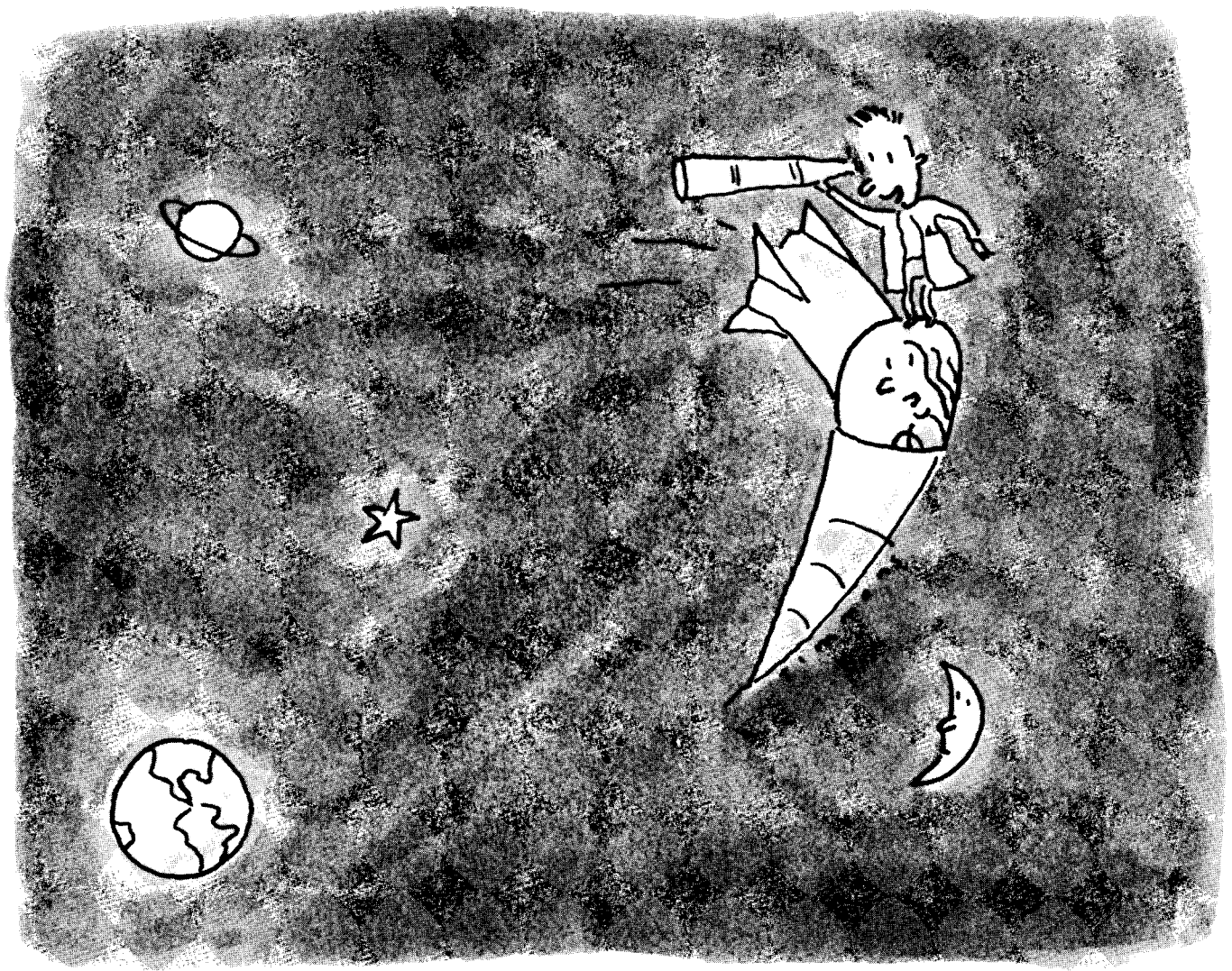
"But what will always remain the same is the schizophrenic aspect of ventriloquism, the tension between illusion and reality, that both attracts and repels."

Lucas took Buffalo Billy down off a chair.

"I hate having to get up," Billy said. "Reality is getting me down. Reality is so phony."

"But, Billy," Lucas said, "you're not real."

"Can I take that as a compliment?" □



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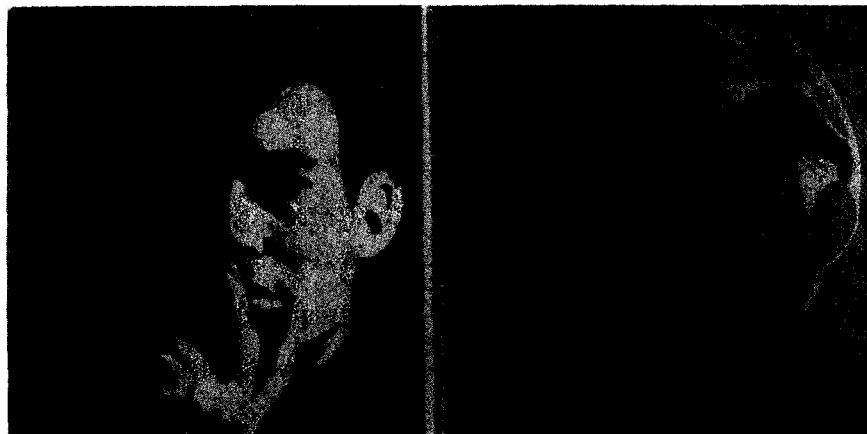
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Double Self-Portrait, 1967, silk-screen ink on synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Andy Warhol the Painter

His achievement was to make an art out of folklore

by Sanford Schwartz

ANDY WARHOL WAS AN ENORMOUS personality during his life, and since his death, in 1987, at fifty-eight, he has become an even larger figure. His place in American art and culture is so enormous and fuzzy—there are so many claims made for what he did, or failed to do, or symbolized—that he's like a din in your head.

Yet if you see the large retrospective of his work that was put together at the Museum of Modern Art last spring and that is now at the Art Institute of Chicago, and can block out what you know about Warhol the celebrity, personality, and problem, I think you'll be amused and touched by his paintings and, even more, come away admiring his sheer artistic—his formal—intelligence. Warhol wasn't a titan; he didn't go from one kind of picture to another, absorbing new styles and transforming them as he went. But he was consistently open to new techniques, and his lack of caution makes him seem like more than a minor master. Seeing a lot of his best work is an expansive experience. His pictures don't draw you into the sensibility of a particular individual; they're mostly about style itself, and they prompt unexpected connec-

tions with the art of his contemporaries and of other periods.

The quality of Warhol's work hasn't been a secret; his Pop Art pictures—the movie stars, labels of products, and grisly tabloid shots—have hung in museums and distinguished collections for years, and there are plenty of publications devoted to this or that aspect of his work. Yet the scope, and particular nature, of his achievement may be a revelation for many. The show goes from Warhol's work as a commercial illustrator in the fifties—he arrived in New York in 1949, when he was in his early twenties—to the paintings he did the year he died. The majority of the pictures, though, are from 1962 through 1964, and they're far and away his finest. Warhol said that if he died by 1970 his reputation would be secure, and he was right. Warhol wasn't a passionate or warm artist; he was a virtuoso of precise placements done at top speed. His finest pictures give something of the same immediate and intense pleasure that watching an Olympic competition does.

When Warhol's images are taken together, they present a sort of ho-hum, everyday American world. We seem to

be only a step away from Depression America. We go from pictures of dollar bills and S&H Green Stamps to Campbell's soup cans, from pictures of Elvis Presley and Natalie Wood to newspaper images of an electric chair and freakish disasters. It's like being in a supermarket. We might be at the checkout counter, flipping through a *National Enquirer* while folks at the head of the line fumble with their coupons. What's compelling about Warhol's work, though, is the distinctive soft presence of his canvases, and the obvious speed, assurance, and high spirits with which he worked.

Warhol's best works are his "serial" paintings, in which the same image is repeated on a single canvas. (He didn't invent serial painting, but he used it to an extent that nobody else has.) We see, sitting right next to one another, or sometimes overlapping one another, two or five or a dozen or an uncountable number of something. It might be Coke bottles, Marilyn Monroe's face (or lips), or Jackie Kennedy at the President's funeral. In reproduction these paintings can appear facetious, even brutal. But the actual pictures have a powdery and breathing surface; you want to get close to the canvas itself. Warhol took his images from photos in magazines and newspapers. He had a silk-screen print made of the image, and then he ran colors through the screen directly on the canvas. When he wasn't printing in black on colorless canvas, he'd paint the canvas a single color first and then print on it in black, and he produced a large number of surprising color harmonies. He still seems audacious in his use of silver and turquoise, lavender, orange, and brown.

If Warhol wanted to print with different colors—if he wanted, say, to make Monroe's lips red—he'd use the same silk screen, but he'd cover every part except the lips and then go over that exposed section with red paint. The result is an echo of nineteenth-century folk art. The colored Marilyn Monroes are like theorems, or mourning pictures—scenes with urns and weeping willows, where the stenciled application of one colored section next to another is so stiffly mechanical and awkward that it conveys more of a sense of the hand that made the work than an average watercolor does.

Essentially, Warhol was a printer on canvas who appears to have done ev-



© Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Art Center Acquisition Fund, 1968

16 Jackies, 1964, acrylic and silk-screen enamel on canvas

everything in a hurry. He clearly didn't care about smudges, dribbles, or inconsistencies in color and intensity, yet he didn't strive for sloppiness, either. The smudges and dribbles don't seem willed, and that's a key element in his success. Looking at a Warhol, your eyes search out—you savor—the mistakes. In a picture made up of many images of the electric chair, the animating detail is the way, when Warhol was printing his silk screen again and again, he didn't quite cover the entire canvas. (If he had printed his electric chairs, or any of his images, neatly, or "correctly," it wouldn't have been a Warhol.)

GOING FROM WORK TO WORK at the exhibition, you watch someone playing with a picture-making device. You're also made aware, in each case, of the canvas itself, which is

as much the "picture" as the various images that are silk-screened onto it. I kept thinking of the abstract painters who were at work at the same time as Warhol; they were sometimes called stain painters, because their pictures were made by staining acrylic colors directly into unprimed canvases. The figure who most came to mind was Morris Louis. Pouring acrylic medium onto big pieces of raw white canvas and then bunching and shifting the canvas (his working methods are something of a mystery), Louis produced images of, as it were, paint on the move. In a typical Louis Veil painting (there is a large series of Veils) a mass of overlapping colors whooshes up from the bottom of the canvas—you might be standing before the mouth of a cave.

Warhol's Pop pictures and Louis's

Veils have nothing in common simply as images, and the two artists are rarely mentioned in the same breath. In the way they've been written about (and shown and collected), they might come from different planets. Louis's art is invariably described in purely aesthetic and technical ways—he's presented as an anonymous genius at an art-school think tank—and Warhol's work is described in terms of, among many other things, his transformation of Liz, Elvis, and Campbell's soup cans into icons. Yet their best pictures have an amazingly similar presence: it is of a bolt of canvas suddenly stamped, or suffused, with an identity. Although their individual paintings are very much framed things—you're conscious of the four edges—their pictures, in spirit, are more like banners than paintings. Ideally, they'd hang outside a big public building, flapping in the wind.

And in the way they worked and in their ambition, Warhol and Louis might have been brothers. Warhol's pictures were, in part, developments of Jasper Johns's and Robert Rauschenberg's use of pop images, and Louis's pictures were, in part, developments of Jackson Pollock's "dripping" and pouring techniques. And both Warhol and Louis seemed to be saying to their predecessors, "Speed it up! You've made art too fussy!" Louis was some sixteen years older than Warhol, but he took a relatively long time to find a right path, and he didn't come into his own until the late fifties, when Warhol was getting under way. Louis died of cancer in 1962, and that was the year that Warhol took off. They were the sons of immigrants (they both changed their names, from Andrew Warhola and from Morris Louis Bernstein), and although it's a cliché to say it, they worked with a mighty need to prove themselves Americans. They were single-minded. Louis dedicated himself to the history of abstract painting; he wanted to make a picture that would mark the necessary next step in the evolution of modern art. Warhol's dream was fame in itself.

The most absorbing photos in the documentary section of the Modern's gigantic Warhol catalogue are pictures of Warhol in his early twenties, posing the way Greta Garbo posed in Steichen's portrait, with her hands cradling her face, and the way Truman Capote

posed in a picture where he lounges on a sofa. Fame, and its representations, were Warhol's meat. It's fascinating to think of him as a young man, both dotting on fame and thinking of how to use it professionally. He's simultaneously in the grip of something larger than himself—he's the quintessential raving fan—and the astute delineator and entrepreneur of fandom. Other documentary photos show that his preoccupation with appearance was personal and long-standing. He was troubled by what he believed was his unromantically lank hair and large nose, and he doctored photographs (and he eventually had himself doctored) to alter the situation.

Warhol and Louis had exalted and monumentally simplified goals, and they perfected picture-making methods that mirrored those all-or-nothing goals. Each was able to make a new kind of picture because of fairly recent technical developments: the silk-screen process and, in Louis's case, fast-drying acrylic paints. Each man created a sort of one-note painting, in which there was little room for fixing or improving. The chief option in their respective techniques was editing, or cropping, the canvas. Once each man found his method, he went into mass production. That both artists produced so many similar works doesn't mean that it's enough to see only a handful. Warhol and Louis look best when you're surrounded by their paintings. Half the thrill is in registering the many variations on a theme.

WARHOL'S FINEST pictures are funny, grotesque, sentimental, grand, beautiful, and blasé all at once. Many of his images are of frightening or sad events or people or things. In addition to electric chairs and the Kennedy assassination, there are suicides, car crashes, race riots, atom bombs. And when these pictures are seen along with the Hollywood stars, a viewer can believe that Warhol was eulogizing the stars. You may want to think of him as an elegiac artist, a chronicler of national violence and loss—it makes him easier to like, less aggressive, more serious, nobler. You may also think that he was licking his lips over the national nightmare.

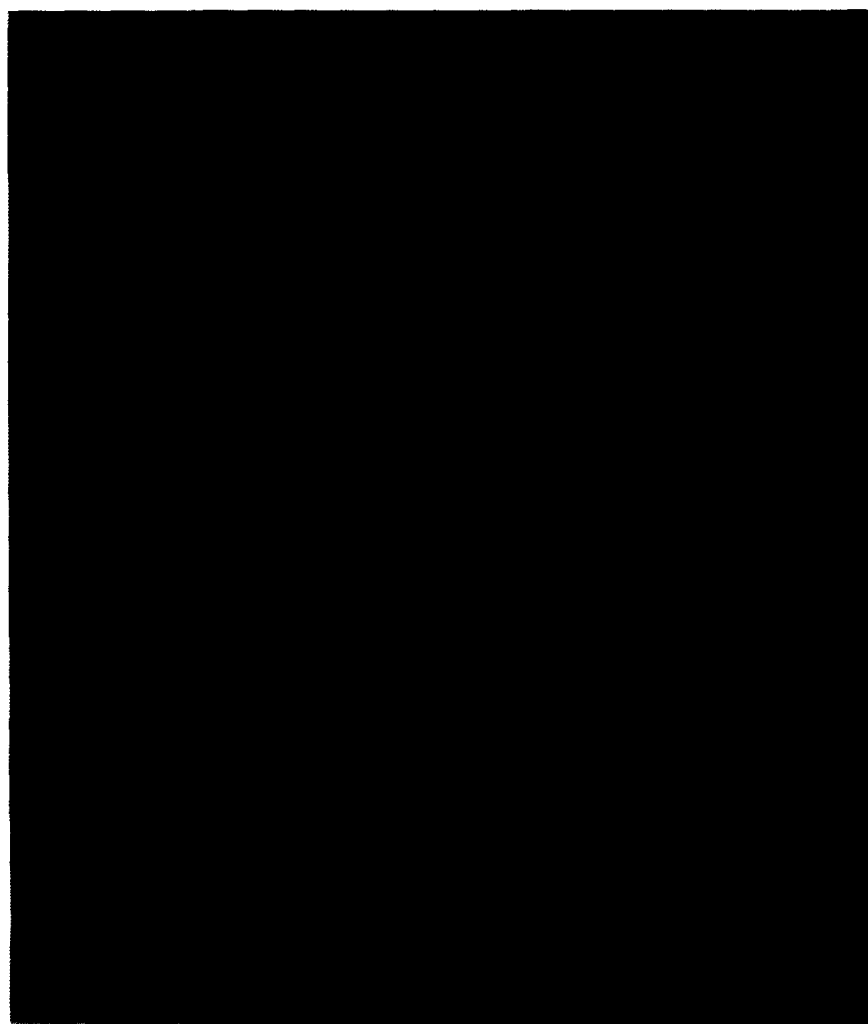
Warhol was a mourner; he did the Marilyns right after she died, and he

said he started on Liz "when she was so sick." He had to have been a bit of a Weegee, too. Mostly, though, he was indifferent to subject matter in itself. His point, it seems, was that the less likely, or acceptable, the image he slapped down on canvas, the greater his chance of aesthetic success. His dancelike and seemingly spontaneous way of placing his silk screens is felt to the degree that he's taking a liberty in using the image in a flip way. And image alone doesn't guarantee that the painting will be good. When he silk-screens a single photo onto a canvas there's no snap; the work is dormant. Warhol is better when his canvas sizes are bigger too; when his paintings are too small, they're often souvenirlike.

After 1964 Warhol's finest work has to do with size itself. In 1966 he covered the walls of a gallery with wallpaper of a repeating image of a photo of a cow's head, done in amusingly tart

and tacky color combinations, and when the wallpaper covers, say, a long corridor, it recalls some of Christo's cloth "wrappings." It has the same sheathlike and cutting-through-space quality, and the same passive but riveting power, as Christo's *Running Fence*, where a seemingly endless white sheet ran over hill after hill, down to the Pacific.

Warhol's other superlative decorative work concerns his use of the official photo of Chairman Mao. In this "piece" different-sized Warhol paintings of Mao (and, as the Modern showed it, drawings, too) are hung on wallpaper Warhol designed that's made up of repeating images of the same photo of Mao. The eye takes in various framed Maos and the Mao wallpaper simultaneously, and the effect is of one big, pulsing, very optical picture. Your second response is probably that the paintings are being toyed with; aren't paintings more important than wall-



Red Disaster, 1963, oil and acrylic on linen

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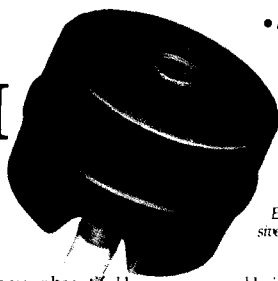
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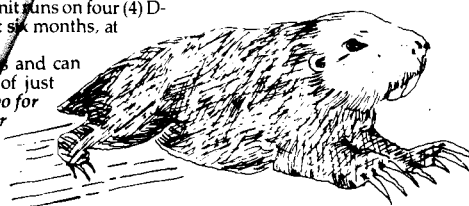
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paper? Yet are Warhol's Mao "paintings" any more his own, or more serious, than his wallpaper? It's as though he were enlarging the scope of his indifference to rigid categories.

But in most of Warhol's later work the indifference—the lovely superficiality—is gone. The effect of his Mick Jagger portraits (and other pictures from the late sixties on) is that he's artifying photographs. He put jazzy lines and sloshed units of paint on top of photos, and it's airless; there's no feeling of an underlying canvas breathing through. What we see is a photo trapped in a lot of artistry.

He certainly continued to experiment. There are recyclings, in attractively pale or disco-hot colors, of his Marilyns, Maos, and other borrowings, and he did striking graphic rearrangements of work by Raphael, da Vinci, Munch, and de Chirico. It could be said that Warhol pursued kinds of touchlessness—that he kept making "Warhols" from images that weren't his own—and in time his works from the seventies and eighties may become resonant. But now they're merely dexterous and pleasant. They suffer from being seen alongside his work from the early sixties. Nothing is rash or tense.

THINKING ABOUT ALL of Warhol's work, and Warhol the person, or character, you're taken into an intricately layered—and intangible, hall-of-mirrors—world. Warhol is one of the most un-pin-downable figures in American art. The strands of irony and naiveté in him are inseparable. When Warhol talked about making his pictures on an assembly line, and called his studio "the Factory," it was hard to know if he was a con man or if he genuinely saw himself as an aspiring captain of industry in the art line. One of his goals apparently was to make his very person an instrument for selling; he seemed to want to turn "Andy Warhol" into an all-purpose brand label, like "Walt Disney." It's possible to see him as a commercial artist all his life. He moved easily back and forth between paintings created for art galleries and works commissioned by this or that bank or corporation, between a thriving business of making portraits of the famous and pure commercial work—ad campaigns for companies.

For some, Warhol's journeying be-

tween the art and business worlds had to be one big arch joke. But for artists coming into their own in the eighties, in a period when art, as never before, seemed to be a sheer commodity, Warhol could be seen as someone who had prophesied this situation, and kidded about it, for years.

You could believe, too, that Warhol wanted most to question, or reinvent, the idea of art. Making a career out of consistently borrowing his material, of never "inventing" anything, he helped create the idea that reproductions in themselves, like the press photos he used, could be a subject, or a takeoff point, for an artist. In the eighties artists have used reproductions (or ads, or posters) the way nineteenth-century painters used waterfalls and mountains—as both a subject of great moment and a mere given. And certainly Warhol was a forerunner of the idea, which has had much currency lately, of the artist as gesture-maker, where the artist's overall intent is what we're concerned with. Warhol's lifelong gesture might be called the making of a sham body of work. Since his paintings were literally pieces of canvas with a photo of something dashed onto them, a "Warhol" could be seen as an ultimate fake, like the "masterpiece" you'd win at Coney Island.

In another light, though, Warhol wasn't an isolated phenomenon; he was, on the contrary, one of many related voices of his period. His best-known statements concern the shallowness and superficiality of his tastes and his work. He said that if you wanted to understand what he was doing, all you needed to do was look at the surfaces of his pictures—that there was nothing behind the surfaces. These sayings have been taken as brilliant, gnomic, subversive utterances. But Warhol's emphasis on shallowness and sheer surface is no different from what contemporaries and near-contemporaries of his such as Johns and Christo and Alex Katz, and Minimalist sculptors such as Donald Judd and Dan Flavin, and stain painters such as Helen Frankenthaler, Larry Poons, and Louis (and others) might have said.

The generation that came to maturity in the fifties and early sixties was romantic about a formal, physical flatness and an emotional blankness. Coming in the wake of the myth-bearing Abstract Expressionists, their chal-

lenge was to see how many associations could be pulled out of art. Johns takes images we know are flat and, in a let's-try-this-but-it-could-be-something-else spirit, gives them a sumptuous—a brooding or an ecstatic—texture. Katz revisits every convention in art—the portrait, the still life, the landscape, the group scene—and, with a tense blandness, refuses to put in the expected emotion. Warhol in his person may have been the hippest of the hip, but when his pictures are seen along with the works of his contemporaries, he's one of a number of talented hipsters.

WARHOL WAS VERY much in harness all his life. Beginning in the middle sixties, he made (or participated in the making of) countless movies, and he had a rock band, the Velvet Underground. Around 1972 he became involved with painting again, and in addition to exhibiting regular new series of pictures from then on, he did between fifty and a hundred commissioned portraits a year. He began the magazine *Interview*, and he put out different compilations of his photographs. He published a novel, a hefty collection of sayings, and, with Pat Hackett, an account of the sixties Pop scene. After his death it was learned that he had assembled an awesomely large collection of art and objects. Yet the biggest impression was made by the man himself. His obsession with his face and his fame could be seen as a freakish passion play of a martyrdom to consumer culture; at times it seemed a spooky, perhaps helpless display of vanity.

There is very little of the personality or the cultural figure "Andy Warhol" to think about when you stand before his best work, though. The finest serial pictures are like pieces of magically airy cake. In the catalogue, in a section of notes on Warhol by artists and friends, he's referred to in the same breath as Picasso, but for me he's more like our Chagall or our Raoul Dufy. Like Chagall, he found a way to make an exquisitely physical and lyrical art out of folklore. (What are Chagall's scenes of Eastern European village life but another culture's pop imagery?) And like Dufy, Warhol was stimulated by the thought of effortlessness. Like the Frenchman, he gave new life to the idea of a light touch. □

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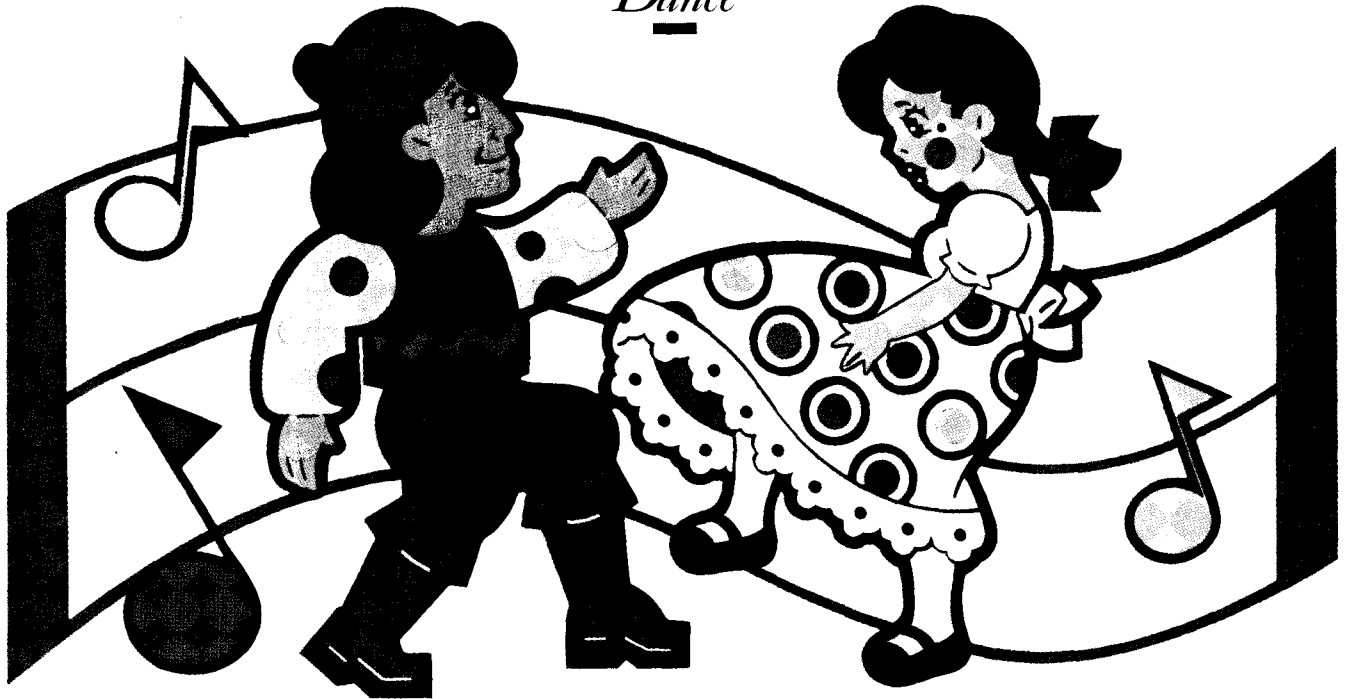
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Polka dancing is as spirited today as when it stormed Europe 150 years ago, but polka-bashing is as old as the dance

by Robert P. Crease

GEORGE PTASZEK is a forty-two-year-old toy-inventor from Pascoag, Rhode Island. Few traces of his Polish upbringing remain except for a love for polka dancing. Every summer Friday afternoon he quits work early and drives to one of the many polka festivals that occur throughout the country. He has attended polka festivals in amusement parks, convention centers, American Legion halls, and open-air tents; one time he followed directions to a San Francisco-area polka festival that turned out to be in a nudist colony. At the festivals he'll hang out with friends, trade dance steps with other people, and check out the single women (he's divorced). But most of all, he'll dance.

For Ptaszek, and for tens of thousands of people like him around the country, polka dancing is not a nostalgic activity but simply the most natural way to have a good time, and it is a vital part of community life. In Ptaszek's case

that community is Polish-American, and the polka is, in fact, most commonly associated with Polish-Americans, though it was not invented in Poland and is not done there much today. Polka festivals also feature in certain Slovenian, German, Czech-Bohemian, Mexican, and Native American communities in America. But though the polka has millions of devotees, they are fewer than they once were, and interest in the dance is waning especially among the young. Ptaszek's twenty-year-old son, for instance, abandoned polka dancing a few years ago under peer pressure, and the enthusiasm of his eighteen-year-old daughter is strained by a lack of partners her age. Some reasons for the polka's decline are a general cultural attitude that disdains social dance and regards the polka as a stepchild on the ballroom floor, the increasing assimilation of ethnic community life, and the polka's reputation as a moronic form of recreation.

POLKA DANCING was a revolutionary act from the beginning. Its birth, development, and triumph were framed by the two most important series of European popular uprisings of the nineteenth century, in 1830 and in 1848. Czech nationalism was growing, and the first political stirrings against the absolutist Germanic Hapsburg rule were accompanied by a renaissance of Czech cultural life, including a revival of regional music and dance forms. A lively peasant dance, popular in a part of what is now Czechoslovakia but was then Bohemia's border region with Poland, became in effect the Czech national dance. It was called the polka, and is alternately said to have been named after the Czech word for "half," referring to the dance's characteristic skip, or half step, and after the Polish people, in sympathy for their abortive revolution of 1830-1831. For years Czechs have attributed the invention

of the polka to one Anna Chadimova, a spirited servant girl from the town of Kostelec, on the Elbe, who supposedly cooked it up in 1830. But if Chadimova did invent the dance, surely she did little more than modify an existing gypsy dance, and adapt existing folk tunes for the purpose.

Though the polka was nothing new to Czechs, it was strikingly different from other European dances of the day. Nearly all popular dances, the polka included, are based on a two-step. What distinguishes them are the different body styles that derive from the rhythm of the music. Polkas are danced to sprightly, fast music in 2/4 time with the emphasis on the first beat; the rhythm encourages a dancer to slide on the second beat and precede it with a hop. The hop-slide movement gives the dance a light and breezy air. The solemnity often present on the faces of ballroom dancers is practically impossible while doing the polka. But you don't really *do* the polka; it is more accurate to say that the polka does you. Abandoning yourself to the polka rhythm, you glide about in an apparent conquest of gravity, finding yourself in personal revolt against oppression, pomposity, and seriousness.

The polka agreed well with the turbulent mood of Europe in the 1840s. Man and woman revolving about each other, arm around waist, cheek brushing cheek, the movements of each couple utterly independent of the others—not to mention the absence of ceremonious bows and curtsies—well suited the liberal temperament of the day. Depending on their social station, people found in it an affirmation of the human spirit; a rebellion against constraint; the excitement of the forbidden, the sensual, and the exotic; or just plain fun. Small wonder that the dance raced through Europe, and that it inflamed people in a way that previous dances, such as the stuffy minuet, with its shallow etiquette and elaborate choreography, the comparatively inert English country dance, and the gentlemanly waltz, never had. Popular theaters, which in terms of disseminating popular culture from region to region were the past century's equivalent of television and radio, supplied the means of transmission to foreign lands. But like other forms of popular culture, the polka subtly changed wherever it took root.

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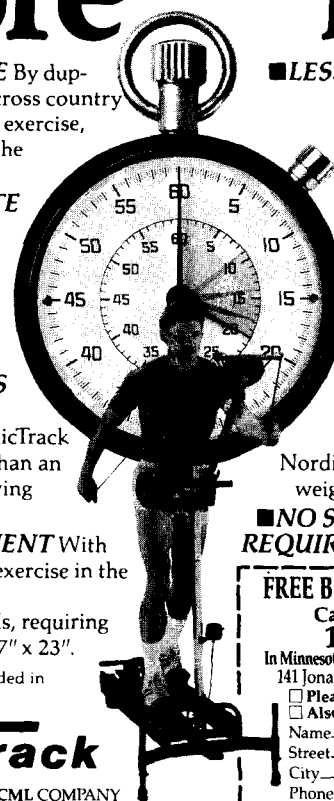
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The New York City Housing Authority is the largest such authority in the country, and it is often singled out as the best. The author conducts a tour of the blighted realm of housing projects it oversees.



HIPPIES, INDIANS, BUFFALO

by Wayne Johnson

"The letter arrived on a cold, rainy Wednesday, a month to the day after the news that Toby had been killed somewhere south of Khe Sanh." A short story.

In 1840 a Prague ballet master named Raab performed the polka in Paris at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu Comique and was besieged by people wishing to do it in dance halls and salons. French dance instructors, sensing the coming frenzy, promoted it and choreographed quadrille-like figures for it. The polka nudged out the equally raucous cancan at the festivals held in public gardens like the Jardin Mabille, in Paris. Novels, plays, and poems incorporated the polka into their themes, while styles of hair and clothing, fabric designs (whence "polka dots"), fans, cakes, and more were done *à la polka*. The dance had become wilder and more elaborate than the simple Bohemian peasant step of only a few years earlier; indeed, Raab returned to Paris in a futile attempt to restore some gentleness to its character. The polka's conquest of Paris, and Paris's of the polka, was completed in March of 1844, when the dance was performed onstage at the Opera. "Politics are for the moment suspended in public regard by the new and all-absorbing pursuit, the Polka," wrote the Paris correspondent of the *Illustrated London News*.

Paris in 1844 was not only the place and time of the triumph of polkamania but also, as it happens, the place and time in which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels began their lifelong collaboration. "I just don't think that's a coincidence," says Charles Keil, a professor of American studies at the University of Buffalo and a collaborator, with his wife, Angeliki Keil, and the photographer Richard Blau, on the forthcoming book *Polka Happiness*. "Things were at a bottom for the working people in advanced capitalist countries, who were beginning to recognize their common situation, and the universal rage for the polka was an expression of this—probably the first manifestation of a popular culture that included all of Europe."

Great Britain, too, caught polka fever that spring. A contemporary account of a London dance hall in the throes of polkamania depicts it as "one vast winnowing machine, and tiny slips of lost muslin floated over it like chaff, or like spray above the billows of the raging sea beneath." A British polka manual advised carrying needle and thread to fix the rips in clothing inevi-

tably caused by the wild dancing; it also counseled men to "stop when you hear your partner sobbing very painfully, or when you observe her gown is coming off." In what many aristocrats viewed as the greatest outrage, polka dancing crashed the sacred British tea party, producing the *thé dansant*, or tea dance (a practice that would be revived almost seventy years later during the tango craze). When the press printed a rumor that the twenty-five-year-old Queen Victoria had forbidden the polka to be danced in her presence, she scheduled a polka at the next Buckingham Palace ball.



The polka arrived in the United States, as everywhere else, onstage. A New York ballet master obtained a description of the sensational dance, together with sheet music, and performed it at the National Theatre in May of 1844. Polkamania was as furious here as abroad. It scarcely seemed a coincidence that the dark horse who gained the Democratic nomination in 1844, and then won the election, was named Polk; one observer wrote only half in jest that the former political unknown had carefully read the signs of the times, "for nobody believes that that is the worthy gentleman's real name."

Soon after 1844 the polka spread all over the world. To the west, it had crossed the Atlantic to the United States and spread through Mexico to South America, where it became Paraguay's national dance. It intoxicated people in Italy, Spain, and Portugal (where there was talk of establishing a "polka legislator"), and entered North Africa with French troops. To the north, it reached Finland and Russia; to the east, India and Indonesia. The dance historian Albert Zorn has written, "The whole world wrote and talked about it, and apparently thought little of anything else."

After the failed revolutions—in France, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe—of 1848, polkamania gradually waned. The next international dance craze, which was on a much smaller scale, did not occur until the tango's arrival from South America, around 1910. But the polka exerted a lasting influence. Eastern European folk songs began to appear as polkas, and classical composers also explored

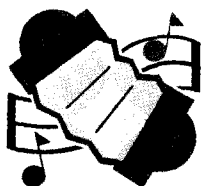
the genre. Most innovative was the Czech composer Bedrich Smetana, who wrote polkas expressly for social dancing and sought, according to one musicologist, "to do for the Polka what Chopin had done for the Waltz." Smetana was by no means alone: the operettas of Jacques Offenbach and Johann Strauss are full of polkas, and even Igor Stravinsky tried his hand: his "Circus Polka" had its premiere at the 1942 opening of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus, with Vera Zorina and a supporting cast of tutu-clad polka-dancing elephants.

As a social dance, however, the polka appeared to be destined for oblivion. By the end of the nineteenth century it was known in most sectors of society only as a tame step that appeared now and then on the programs of balls and cotillions. As a revolutionary people's dance, the polka was dead.

EXCEPT, THAT IS, in the United States, where several ethnic communities continued to develop, expand, and explore the polka. The forums in which this happened were not concert or recital halls or elegant ballrooms—where the music and dance are essentially performances for spectators—but communal events such as weddings, feasts, and celebrations, and also bars.

As the Keils stress in *Polka Happiness*, polkas are quite different from most other forms of music and dance, for they are not products "consumed" by community members but, rather, integral parts of a larger social experience. Whereas blues lyrics, for instance, are like confessions, bearing witness to one's own situation in gory detail, polka lyrics are like creeds, stating communal beliefs and feelings at their simplest. There are few polka "message" songs. Polkas may sound unsophisticated and even vapid to nonparticipants. Consider this quintessential polka lyric, from the title track of the Chicago bandleader Eddie Blazonczyk's Grammy award-winning album *Polka Celebration*:

When you're feeling down and
out and need some cheering
up,
I'm gonna tell you what you need
to do,



Get on out and listen to your favorite polka band,
It's guaranteed to help you chase away the blues.
We're gonna have a polka celebration!
You bring your friends out, and I'll bring mine.
We're gonna have a polka celebration!
We're gonna party and have a good time!

Each ethnic community that adopted polka music and dances modified them, creating new traditions in the process. To Czech-Bohemian immigrants, for instance, polkas were folk music and dance from the old country; nevertheless, their music soon acquired a distinctively American sound, with a greater role for brass instruments, a lesser one for the fiddle, and lyrics that bespoke life in the New World. An example is the famous and decidedly American "Beer Barrel Polka" ("Roll out the barrel/We'll have a barrel of fun"), written by a Czech-American, Jaromir Vejvoda, in 1902. Slovenian immigrants, too, most notably Frank Yankovic, developed polkas their own way. Yankovic's style involves clear and precise performance by a pared-down orchestra: two accordions, a bass, a banjo (clearly revealing a Dixieland influence), and occasionally a drum. German-American polkas tend to have a heavy downbeat emphasized by tubas. Mexican-American communities in the Southwest developed two styles, one dominated by concertina and bass guitar, the other characterized by a big-band sound. Polkas of Native American communities in Arizona tend to be fast-paced, especially those of the Papago-Pima and Yaqui Indians. A form of polka is also found in country and western music.

But the polka is associated most closely with the Polish-American community.

By the late 1920s Polish-American musicians had given their polkas a distinctive sound by de-emphasizing violins and other strings and adding trumpets and other brass instruments, saxophones, and percussion; Polish-American bands came to sound more like vaudeville pit orchestras than folk ensembles. Recordings from the time show an inventive use of instrumenta-

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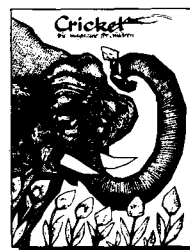
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tion, orchestration, and vocal arrangements, and a few vocalists developed scat singing. Two main polka styles eventually emerged. One, now called Eastern style, tends to be fast, with intricate arrangements and sophisticated orchestration. The other style, Chicago, tends to be slower, folksier, and performed with fewer instruments.

The heyday of the Eastern-style polka began in the late 1930s, when big-band swing strongly affected the performance of polkas. Eastern-style musicians, especially a clarinetist and bandleader named Bernie Witkowski, incorporated Latin influences, jazz rhythms, and improvisation. Rock-and-roll has proved difficult to assimilate into polka music: polkas stress the first beat in 2/4 time, whereas rock usually emphasizes the back beat in 4/4 time. One of the most dedicated partisans of Eastern-style polkas is the three-time Grammy winner Jimmy Sturr, an Irish-American clarinet and saxophone player who learned to love polkas while growing up in a Polish town in New York. Dancing to Eastern-style music is fast and furious, with big hops, long glides, and jitterbug-style arm movements.

The ascendancy of Chicago-style polkas coincided with the rise of country and western music in the 1950s. A self-taught musician from Chicago named Walter Jagiello ("Li'l Wally") defined the style by slowing down the tempo to the point that disc jockeys mailed back some of his first records, marking them "Defective—too slow." His polkas also had less melodic elaboration and more "feel." Chicago-style polkas subdivide into two styles, "honky" and "dyno." The former develops Li'l Wally's folk sound, while the latter, pioneered by the Chicago bandleader Marion Lush, has a more driving sound that is nonetheless slower than the Eastern style. Chicago-style polka dancers move much more slowly than Eastern-style dancers and tend to downplay hops, slides, and spins, shuffling back and forth along the dance floor like tacking sailboats.

THREE DECADES AGO bands like Sturr's, Blazonczyk's, and Lush's did little traveling, because they were able to find plenty of work close to home; New York City's

Roseland, for instance, used to have a polka night. But the number of polka bands and venues has dwindled.

What's to blame is a waning interest in dancing the polka. Polka music, like swing fifty years ago and Carolina "beach music" today, is mainly supported by those who dance to it. The pinch had already been felt in 1968, when a group of enthusiasts, including Blazonczyk, founded the International Polka Association and Hall of Fame to promote polkas. The IPA headquarters is a small former union hall in one of Chicago's oldest Polish neighborhoods—in striking contrast to, say, Nashville's multimillion-dollar Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

Today's polka promoters have to feature several bands at once to draw a crowd for a nationally advertised festival. Even though polka festivals take place each weekend during the summer and attract bands and people from all over the country, they are a symptom of the polka's decline. The polka's increasing visibility at a national level has paradoxically been brought about by the loss of its vitality at a local level.

The oldest national polka festival, the Pillar Polkabration, was founded by Dick Pillar, a Connecticut bandleader, in 1965. Last year's was eleven days long and encompassed forty bands, with dancing from morning to night. The festivities peaked on the final Saturday evening, when several bands performed nonstop polkas in the main ballroom. There the atmosphere was similar to that which could once have been found every weekend at numerous local clubs across the country.

The room was packed—hundreds were turned away—and the music was so loud that you had to shout to be heard by a neighbor. Many people had brought instruments to accompany the band, from store-bought triangles and tambourines to homemade bells, wooden clappers, and rattles made of beer cans filled with pebbles. In a lounge in the back of the hall a five-year-old was sacked out on three chairs; nearby, a mother rocked a six-month-old to sleep in tempo. People stood on chairs screaming

encouragement to the dancers, and dancers screamed back. At one point the room went alternately dark and light as someone flicked the overhead lights off and on to the music. Someone else picked up the three-foot-orange police cone used to mark the edge of the dance floor and, after unsuccessfully trying to wear it on his head, began to bellow through it. A six-year-old girl holding a stuffed monkey paraded about on her father's shoulders; band members invited girl and monkey onstage, where the monkey got its own microphone.

Nearly everyone sang along. Members of the bands that had played earlier in the evening were on the floor dancing. One could see many different kinds of polkas, from fast Eastern style to Chicago style to *obereks* (polka waltzes) to "figure" polkas (polkas choreographed to specific songs, most by Bernie Witkowski). Grandparents shuffled along on the dance floor at their own pace, while younger couples dashed back and forth. Nobody was a mere spectator; everyone was bound together in one communal event. The last songs of the evening were the Polish national anthem ("Jeszcze Polska Nie Zginela") and "God Bless America."

At the Pillar Polkabration, which will take place July 21–30 at Rocky Point Park, in Warwick, Rhode Island, and at numerous other polka festivals, one can hear bands performing different styles of polka music, and bands that have incorporated a variety of influences, from country to jazz and Latin. Recently polkas have begun to get closer to the mainstream. A Texas rock band called Brave Combo, for instance, is attempting to present polkas as a commercial musical form. Last year the composer and accordionist Guy Klucsevsek staged "Polkas From the Fringe," a concert of thirty-one polkas by thirty composers, at the

Brooklyn Academy of Music. Despite the overall decline of polka bands, the music continues to be performed by skilled musicians who are continually incorporating new influences; meanwhile, their principal audience, polka dancers, holds them to high standards.

By any reasonable criterion, then, the polka ought surely to be regarded



as among the most dynamic and innovative participatory art forms this country has ever produced.

BUT POLKA-BASHING is as old as the polka itself. In the beginning, sentinels of high culture denounced the polka for its wildness and crudeness; "the weathercock heads of the Parisians," declared the *Illustrated London News* soon after the polka's arrival in that city, "have been delighted always by any innovation, but they never imported anything more ridiculous or ungraceful than this Polka." In 1844 *Punch* occupied many a page lampooning the polka, with cartoons showing the dance being performed by aboriginal-like couples. High society in the United States objected to the polka, as it had objected to the waltz a few decades before, because the correct performance of the dance requires holding one's partner uncomfortably close. One American newspaper lamented that the polka scene here "outstrip[ped] the most disgraceful exhibitions of the lowest haunts of Paris and London."

After the polka became a safe part of the basic ballroom repertoire, polka jokes reversed course and began to target the dance's dowdiness. In *Good Morning, Vietnam*, for instance, Robin Williams plays an ultra-hip disc jockey who comes to Saigon at the height of the Vietnam War to liven up the music found on Armed Forces radio; polkas are used as the emblem of the previous music's dorkiness. (The polkas on the soundtrack are not by Sturr, Blazonczyk, or Lush, which would not have made the point, but by Lawrence Welk.)

Polkas are also associated with a derogatory Polish stereotype that involves crude men in bowling shirts married to fat women who cook greasy sausage and dance with each other. IPA officials were unsurprised to find, one day last year, a message on their answering machine from a casting director of Jessica Lange's forthcoming movie, *Men Don't Leave*, which announced that the movie would include a scene at a Polish polka party; would IPA officials be so kind as to arrange for a 200-pound Polish woman to dance with Lange for the occasion? The IPA officials reluctantly complied.



Polka-music critics occasionally debate whether certain New Wave bands that have forged a reputation by parodying polka music, such as Polkacide (whose logo is a skull and crossbones with the crossbones replaced by sausages, and which claims that polkas give people a chance to "dress crazy and really let loose"), the Polish Muslims ("Love Polka Number Nine," "Bowling U.S.A."), and Rotondi ("Polka Till You Puke"), damage or enhance the reputation of the genre.

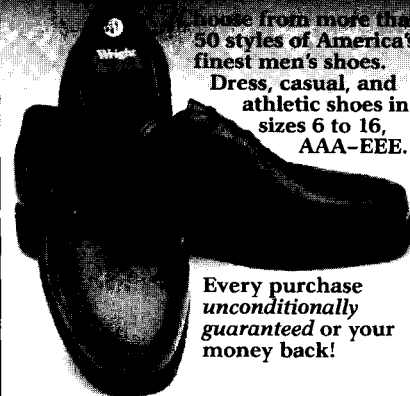
Less easy to shrug off was a column two years ago in *The Pulse of Broadcasting* by a Manhattan-based editor named Tom Shovan, who called polkas "dischordant [sic] bass and accordion atrocities [sic]," declared that he couldn't tell them apart, and implied that they didn't belong on weekend radio. "I have to believe," Shovan concluded, "it's something akin to dogs sniffing other dogs' urine on fire hydrants and trees—it's God's gift to the Polish." Letters of protest flowed in from working-class communities all over the country.

Shovan's comments illustrate the kind of attitude that many musicians feel has prevented the polka from reaching a wider audience. "We're getting the doors slammed in our faces," Blazonczyk says. "The major television, radio, and even record people continue to think that polkas mean Lawrence Welk music. But that's *completely* wrong."

Sturr has had a similar experience. "Three Grammys," he says, "and the big television people still won't talk to me."

But a revitalization of polka music will require more than national media attention—it won't happen without a revitalization of polka dancing. That the polka is usually learned from parents and done on occasions, such as weddings and parties, when community bonds are strongly forged has caused it to be regarded as boring and stodgy; its bouncy air has also earned it a reputation as the corniest of social dances. A revival of the polka will require repudiating these stereotypes, and valuing not only the community-forming role the polka plays but also the liberating personal experience it provides. □

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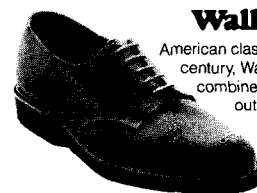


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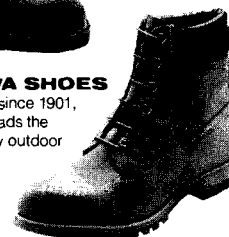
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ANDREW JOHNSON endured more ignominy than any other President save perhaps Richard Nixon. While Nixon resigned to escape impeachment, Johnson *was* impeached by the House, but he remained in office after the roll call for conviction by the Senate fell one vote short of the necessary two thirds. How and why this happened is the focal point of most biographies of Johnson, including the newest one, by Hans L. Trefousse, a professor of history at Brooklyn College and at City University Graduate Center in New York and the author of several biographies and monographs on the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

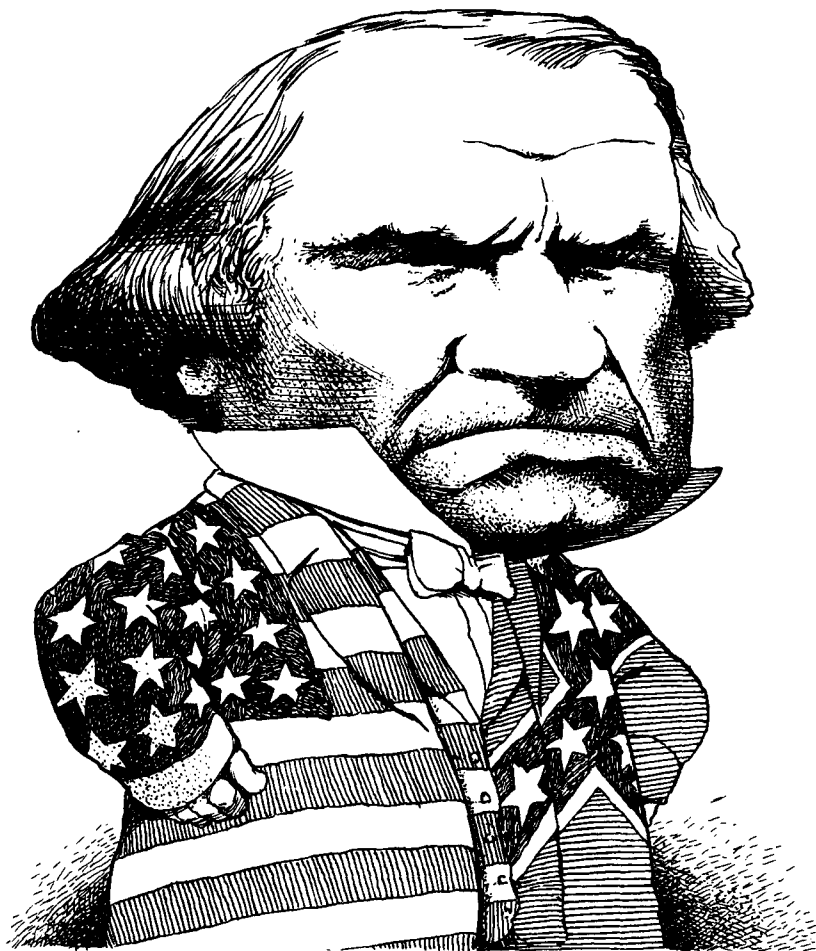
Johnson became President at a moment of supreme triumph and tragedy in American history. Northern victory in the Civil War had preserved the nation from dismemberment and excised the cancer of slavery. But overnight the celebrations turned to mourning when John Wilkes Booth murdered Abraham Lincoln. Without warning or preparation, without Lincoln's prestige, lacking his predecessor's political genius for employing flexible means to achieve principled ends, Johnson faced the daunting task of reconstructing a war-torn Union and guiding a slave society in its transition to freedom. He did so as a Democrat elected by Republicans, a southerner presiding over a government and nation now dominated by the North, and a lifelong supporter of slavery at the head of an anti-slavery party. Johnson proved unequal to the task. His administration was wracked by three years of escalating conflict

with Congress which culminated in impeachment and near conviction.

Who was this Andrew Johnson? With the deft skill of a veteran biographer, Hans Trefousse traces Johnson's rise literally from a log cabin to the White House. Johnson was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, of illiterate parents. His father, a porter and janitor, died when Andrew was three. Apprenticed to a tailor at the age of ten, Johnson somehow learned to read without attending school for a single day. When he was fifteen, Johnson ran away and wandered around the Carolinas and Tennessee before settling down in Greeneville, in east Tennessee, a land of small farms in the valleys between the Cumberland and Great Smoky mountains. There he married and set up his own tailor shop. Avid for self-improvement, he continued his education under his

wife's tutelage. He prospered in business, made money in real estate, and even bought a few slaves. Possessed of driving energy, a crude eloquence, and great ambition, Johnson went into politics and was elected an alderman in 1829 at the age of twenty-one. He took office as Greeneville's mayor five years later. From there his career took off in an ascending spiral to the state legislature, the House of Representatives, the governorship, and the Senate, where he represented Tennessee when Lincoln's election and the clash at Fort Sumter propelled his state and ten others into secession and civil war.

Johnson's career was molded by his consciousness of himself as a self-made man. A Jacksonian Democrat, he championed the cause of farmers and "mechanics" against "aristocrats." He crusaded for a homestead law and pub-



ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILLIAM BRAMHALL

AUGUST 1989

lic education but opposed state aid to banks, corporations, and railroads. Defensive and thin-skinned about his humble origins, he appointed himself spokesman for "poor whites" against the planter class above and the slaves below. "I am for the *people*," he declared. "Some day I will show the stuck-up aristocrats who is running the country. A cheap purse-proud set they are, not half as good as the man who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow."

Slaves earned their bread by the sweat of their brows, but Johnson wasted no sympathy on them. Quite the contrary; he looked down on blacks as he believed the aristocrats looked down on him. The view in both directions helped form a sense of identity for the yeoman whites with whom Johnson identified himself. Unlike some other representatives of this class, Johnson consistently supported slavery. Black people were "inferior to the white man in point of intellect," he said, and better suited "to undergo drudgery and hardship." He saved his heaviest rhetorical artillery for northern abolitionists, who "would place every splay-footed, bandy-shanked, hump-backed, thick-lipped, flat-nosed, woolly-headed, ebon-colored negro in the country upon an equality with the poor white man." If the Yankees tried to abolish slavery, Johnson warned in 1856, non-slaveholding whites would "join the master in extirpating this race from existence, rather than see them liberated and turned loose upon the country."

In 1865 the slaves had been "turned loose upon the country" and Johnson was President. This anomaly resulted from the revolutionary transformation wrought by the Civil War. Johnson's Unionism was as staunch as that of his fellow Tennessean and political hero Andrew Jackson. When the "stuck-up aristocrats" of western and central Tennessee took the state into the Confederacy, Johnson and most of the hard-scrabble eastern Tennesseans remained loyal to the Union. Johnson was the only senator from the eleven Confederate states to stay in the U.S. Senate. This made him a hero in the North. When Union arms conquered much of Tennessee in 1862, Lincoln appointed Johnson "military governor" of the state. Johnson initially opposed emancipation as a war policy and helped persuade Lincoln to exempt

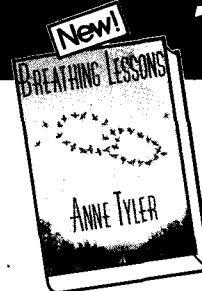
Tennessee from the Emancipation Proclamation. But by 1863 he recognized that Union victory would destroy slavery. In August he came out openly for emancipation, and guided the formation of a Unionist government in Tennessee based on a free-state constitution in 1865. All this placed Johnson nominally in the Republican camp. But his newly blossomed anti-slavery beliefs were quite different, at the root, from those of the many Republicans who considered slavery immoral. "D—the negroes," Johnson said during the war, according to a contemporary source. "I am fighting these traitorous aristocrats, their masters."

Nevertheless, Johnson had achieved sufficient stature among Republicans to win the vice-presidential nomination in 1864. This came about because Lincoln's party broadened its base and temporarily renamed itself the Union Party in an attempt to attract War Democrats and border-state Unionists. Vice-President Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, added no strength to the ticket of such a reformulated party. So with Lincoln's acquiescence and perhaps at his initiative, the Republicans dumped Hamlin and nominated Johnson.

FOR A FEW WEEKS after the assassin's bullet catapulted him into the presidency, Johnson voiced a draconian position on Reconstruction. "Treason is a crime and must be made odious," he thundered. "Traitors must be impoverished. . . . They must not only be punished, but their social power must be destroyed." Johnson declared an amnesty but exempted leading Confederates and wealthy southerners. He issued reconstruction proclamations that authorized Unionists and lesser Confederates to form new state governments and return to the Union. The purse-proud aristocrats would learn who was running the country.

Or would they? Johnson's policy soon began to unravel. The first part to go was the punishment and impoverishment of traitors. By scores daily, the President pardoned individual southerners who had been exempted from his amnesty proclamation—more than 13,000 altogether. These pardons included the restoration of property and political rights. Freed slaves who had taken up land on abandoned or confiscated plantations suddenly found

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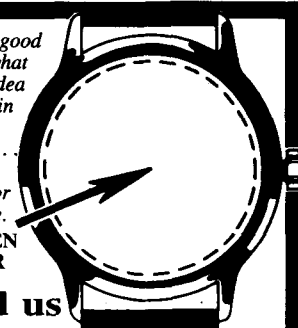
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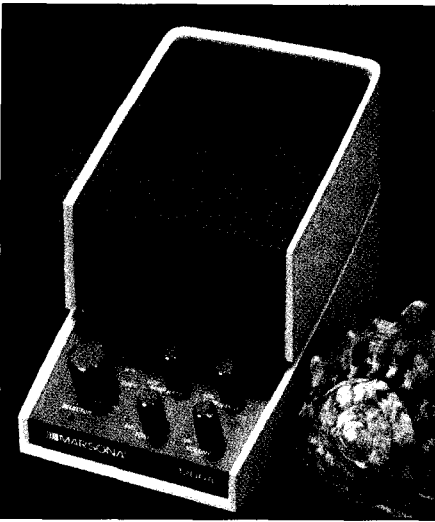
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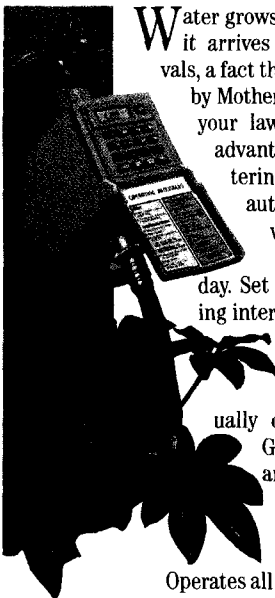
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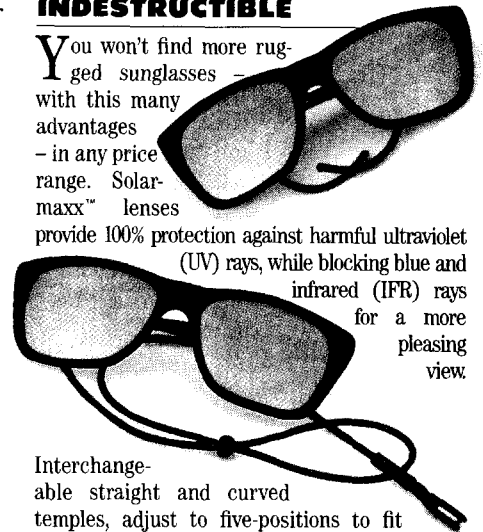
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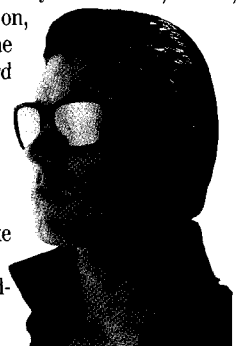


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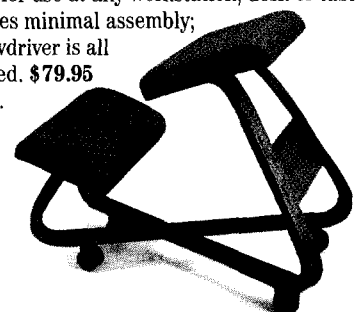


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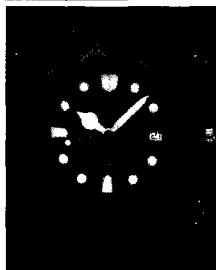
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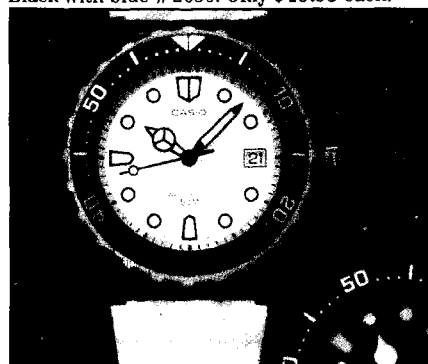
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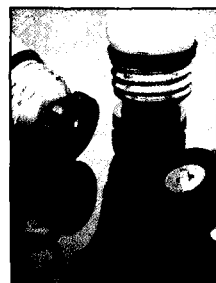


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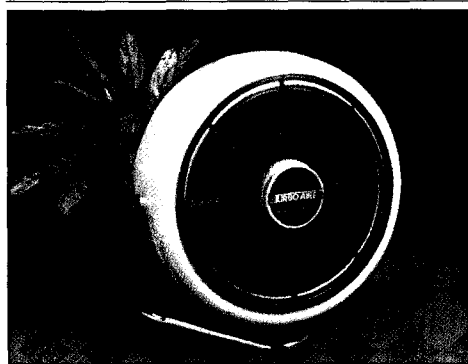


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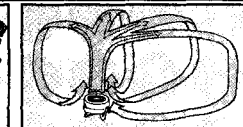


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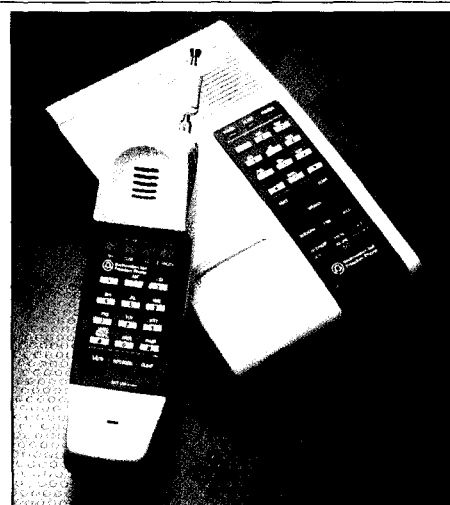


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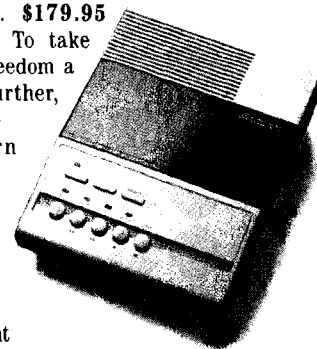


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themselves ejected by ex-Confederate planters with pardons in their hands. These same "aristocrats" were elected to office in the new state governments. Some of these governments organized militias composed in part of former Confederate soldiers. They also passed "black codes" that restricted the civil rights and economic freedom of freedmen so narrowly that their condition seemed little better than slavery. Under Johnson's policy southern states in 1865 elected to the United States Congress no fewer than nine Confederate congressmen, seven Confederate state officials, four generals, four colonels—and the former Confederate Vice-President, Alexander Stephens. Some of these men had not even received pardons yet—but Johnson promptly remedied that. To apprehensive and angry northerners it appeared that the rebels, unable to capture Washington in war, were about to do so in peace. Emboldened by Johnson's policy, southerners who had been willing in the spring of 1865 to accept almost any terms imposed by the conqueror had by the fall reasserted their old-time "secesh" manners of defiance and domination. In combination with northern Democrats, they looked forward to ruling the country again as they had done through most of the antebellum generation.

Republicans did not intend to take this lying down. They had a two-thirds majority in Congress. Radical Republicans wanted to use this power to disfranchise ex-Confederates and enfranchise the freedmen, to ensure the loyalty of state governments and the protection of blacks' rights in the South. The moderate majority of the party was not at first prepared to go this far. Instead, they excluded southern representatives from Congress and tried to work out an accommodation with Johnson on a reconstruction policy that would include a federal guarantee of basic civil rights for freedmen, the continuation of the Freedmen's Bureau to protect the ex-slaves from economic exploitation, and mild restrictions on the political power of leading ex-Confederates.

Johnson would have none of it. He vetoed every reconstruction and civil-rights bill passed by Congress. He opposed the Fourteenth Amendment. He denounced radical Republicans as "traitors" in the same manner as he

had once denounced Confederates. This behavior drove moderate Republicans over to the radicals and polarized the government between Congress and the Executive. Congress enacted over Johnson's repeated vetoes a comprehensive reconstruction program that reorganized southern states on the basis of Negro suffrage and equal rights. Johnson used his executive powers to frustrate this program. In 1868 the exasperated Republicans finally impeached him. Unwilling to approve such a drastic step, seven Republican senators joined twelve Democrats to vote for acquittal, enabling Johnson to escape conviction by the margin of one vote. He served out the rest of his term quietly.

AN EARLIER GENERATION of historians, sympathetic to white supremacy and southern Democrats, praised Johnson's "principled" defiance of the "vengeful and fanatical" Republicans. But since the 1950s revisionist historians have reversed this perception of Johnson and the Republicans. Despite their faults and shortcomings, the latter are now viewed as the proponents of racial progress, while Johnson is cast as the villain. A prominent revisionist for the past quarter century, Hans Trefousse reaffirms that interpretation in this biography. Though he leans over backward to be fair to Johnson, Trefousse nevertheless concludes that he "reanimated Southern resistance and fatally undermined efforts to integrate the freedmen into society. . . . [This] was his legacy to the nation, one that would trouble the country for generations to come."

The question remains, Why? Why did Johnson break with the party that elected him and embrace the "traitors" he had fought so long? No easy answer is possible; many have been offered. Trefousse finds "the explanation for this riddle [in] Johnson's personality and ideology." Johnson was, after all, a lifelong southerner and Democrat. Though elected by northern Republicans, he never lost his states'-rights convictions, and they re-emerged after 1865 to challenge the Republican policy of federal intervention to protect blacks' rights and curb the power of ex-Confederates. Johnson insisted that because secession was unconstitutional, the southern states had never legally left the Union and therefore re-

sumed all their normal functions as states in 1865. No amount of evidence that the states had in fact left the Union to preserve slavery and now invoked state sovereignty to preserve white supremacy could shake Johnson's conviction.

Indeed, as Trefousse demonstrates, Johnson was committed to white supremacy. Much of his defiance of the Republicans was driven by a determination to prevent "the subjugation of the States to negro domination," as Johnson put it in a message to Congress. "This is a country for white men," the President said privately in 1865, "and by God, as long as I am President, it shall be a government for white men." Johnson's private secretary, who shared the President's feelings, nevertheless wrote in an 1868 diary entry, "The President has at times exhibited morbid distress and feeling against the negroes." On one occasion, after an interview with a black delegation headed by Frederick Douglass, who urged Johnson to support Negro suffrage, the President exploded. He said, as his secretary told a reporter, "Those d——d sons of b——s thought they had me in a trap. I know that d——d Douglass; he's just like any nigger, & he would sooner cut a white man's throat than not."

All this helps to explain the ideology that motivated Johnson's behavior, and some of his personality traits as well. But Trefousse is less satisfying on the matter of personality than of ideology. His references to Johnson's stubbornness and his combative nature do not probe very far below the surface. Trefousse takes no note of two intriguing interpretations of the most puzzling aspects of Johnson's behavior: his impulsive pardons of men he had denounced a few months earlier as odious traitors, and his willful flouting of Congress and the party that had elected him. In *The Era of Reconstruction* the historian Kenneth Stampp suggested that Johnson experienced a deep sense of ego gratification when the purse-proud aristocrats who had once scorned him now prostrated themselves before him as supplicants for pardon. To one such group of southerners who contritely confessed the error of their ways and promised future loyalty, Johnson expressed his gratitude. "I remember the taunts, the jeers, the scowls, with which I was treated," he said, adding

that he was delighted to "have lived to see the realization of my predictions and the fatal error of those whom I vainly essayed to save from the results [of their folly]."

This interpretation would seem worthwhile for a biographer to pursue. So would the line of inquiry opened by the chapter titled "Andrew Johnson, Outsider" in Eric McKittrick's book *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*. Johnson was always an outsider battling the establishment, succeeding against great odds as a champion of the underdog. In antebellum Tennessee he was a Democrat in a Whig state, a spokesman for the common man against planter domination, a representative of poor and rocky east Tennessee against the fertile western lowlands. In 1861 he refused to go with his state into the Confederacy; during the war he ruled a hostile civilian population as military governor. Johnson was temperamentally incapable of working within the establishment; during Reconstruction the North and the Republicans *were* the establishment. Johnson's defiance of them was consistent with his whole career; once again he could fight for the underdog against the odds. Abraham Lincoln, the pre-eminent political insider, must have been turning over in his grave. □

Roman Rapture

by Corby Kummer

ITALIAN DAYS

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THE JOURNALIST and essayist Barbara Grizzuti Harrison has always been restless and judgmental, frank and seemingly dissatisfied. Now the object of her searches in previous writings, on topics including feminism, celebrities, and her and her mother's time as Jehovah's Witnesses, is made explicit. She is looking for her faith, for the ability to reconcile herself to the memory of her difficult parents, and for her soul's rest.

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Jerusalem

Whose city—whose "holy city" is it?

It's twenty years that the city of Jerusalem has been reunited under Israeli rule. But there is still much talk that solution of the "Middle East Problem" will not be possible until Israeli Jews relinquish their "occupation" and restore the holy city—or at the very minimum, its eastern part—to its "rightful owners", the Moslem Arabs.

What are the facts?

■ Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city were rarely, if every, asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side by side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

■ The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times and now has gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Al Aksa Mosque. It's close to the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. Mohammed never set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Christians and Jews, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. In recognition of the city's holiness to Jews, Moslems built the Al Aksa Mosque. But never in Moslem history did this mosque compare in significance to the Moslem holy cities of Mecca and Medina—cities that no "infidel" may visit.

■ It's on the basis of this religious tradition that the Moslems designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their

holy site. The Israeli Government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, has largely acceded to this tradition and has put the area in and around the Al Aksa Mosque entirely under Moslem control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, the Moslem tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. On the tenuous claim to the Temple Mount, they have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at the very least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city." And it would be an insult to all Moslems and all Arabs to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews".

■ But the city of Jerusalem—in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus—has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never even a provincial or sub-provincial capital. It was the site of one Moslem holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until most recent history.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th Century. Jews have holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem, based on the Al Aksa Mosque on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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G.F.

A/7

Italian Days is a rich account of a long stay in Italy, visiting monuments, conducting brief and intensive friendships, eating, following the tracks of writers and historians, and everywhere looking for her place in the Church in which she was baptized but which she left in childhood, returning only as an adult. The search is easier than it would have been in America: "What a happy, human Church the Italian one is!" she exclaims. "When people think

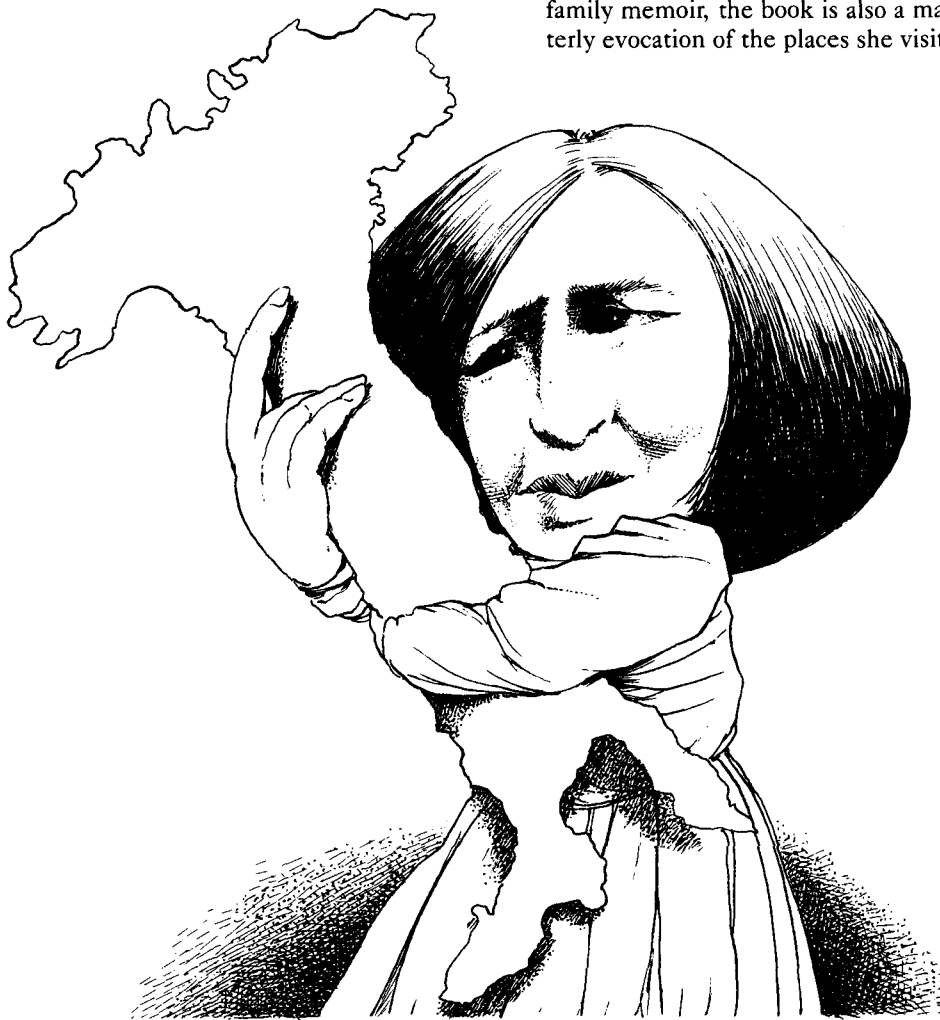
Abruzzi and Calabria, where she will find echoes of the beautiful mother who gave virtually no evidence of loving her and whom she did not love until death separated them, and the father she loved but had to escape from, a father who fainted at will and who was so upset by her leaving home that he actually left Brooklyn—something done in her family only under duress—and spied on her in the tiny apartment she took in Manhattan.

Although by turns a warm and a raw family memoir, the book is also a masterly evocation of the places she visits.

framing old women shelling peas in doorways," and "laughing nuns pushing children on orange swings, their heavy habits floating on magnolia-scented air." The winding drive from Naples along the Amalfi coast is "fragrant, serpentine, Saracen, sunlit, kaleidoscopic." She summarizes Milan, where her "irritable intelligence" is fully attuned to the humbuggery she sees around her: "The melancholy of Milan may be dressed to kill, it may be almost unrecognizable, but it is as pervasive as the diesel fumes, the staccato tapping of heels on marble."

Harrison is almost never without an opinion, and if one wearies of her as a companion, there are generous samplings of the travelers who for generations explained Italy to foreigners: Charles Dickens, H. V. Morton, John Ruskin, Stendhal, Montaigne, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Norman Douglas, Georgina Masson. She includes Italians, too—Luigi Barzini, Umberto Eco, and especially Giambattista Vico, an eighteenth-century philosopher and essayist who is fashionable today. Her explanations of history are not routine but instead charged by her interest. Dante and Saint Augustine are touchstones. She is especially taken by the lives of the saints, offering entertaining stories from this arcanum at the least excuse.

Harrison is constantly monitoring her own emotions, aware that the "sadness or loneliness" of traveling alone can be "the gateway to felicity or exaltation," and she is constantly alive to the pleasures and pain of the people she meets. She has written before of the magnetic attraction she exerts on strangers, and it serves her well throughout Italy. Chance meetings lead to a charming report of a first communion in the Abruzzi, for example, and a merciless one of an aristocratic wedding near Naples. Some encounters are amusing and enlightening, others less so, but her ear is always accurate. "Nuns," one friend, whose husband is unfaithful, says bitterly. "At least they're married to someone they like." When no one is at hand to provide material, she makes sure that she finds some. She not only eavesdrops on the conversations of others in restaurants but actually presses a glass to the wall of her bedroom so as to overhear what her neighbors are fighting about.



of the Catholic Church, and speak of it in fear, admiration, condescension, or anger, they never seem to be seeing *this* Church—the Church of family, community, simplicity, anchorage, and ease."

Her stay will culminate in a search for relatives, in the south, but she starts in the industrialized north, in Milan, a city "impossible to love," and proceeds to Venice, Florence, and Rome, where for her "Italy begins." She goes on to the regions of the

Harrison has the capacity to let Italy enter her being, to sit in a piazza or a church for hours absorbing, even ingesting—"I could eat this light"—the scene. She captures the delight of discovery, of passionate attachment to a place formed in an afternoon's wanderings. She can encapsulate Italy in one paragraph—for example, describing the landscape near the medieval Tuscan town of San Gimignano, with "gardeners turning over soil with gnarled, patient hands," "showers of wisteria

Harrison's stories are uncensored—they have the day's freshness, and she doesn't second-guess herself or pull back from embarrassing revelations, like the glass against the wall. She mentions many stairways, at one point referring to the return of "my ghastly fear of steps." Food is an "obsession." She takes "comfort in chocolate" and ice cream and frequent large meals, recitations of which interrupt her narrative. (Harrison's interest in food is more enthusiastic than scholarly or critical; a useful book to buy along with hers is the recently published *Eating in Italy*, by Faith Heller Willinger, an unvaryingly accurate and indispensable guide to the regions north of Rome.)

This very freshness and the need to record what she eats and exactly whom she meets point to the main flaw of the book: its disorganization and randomness. Like menus, accounts of current events are dropped into the text, providing a framework more tenuous than supportive with their maddening intermittence. Articles and short pieces of fiction that she has previously published appear without warning. A fondness for long parenthetical discussions often leads to an impenetrable forest of brackets. Necessary information about her family arrives too late and then, like other facts and observations, is repeated, seemingly unintentionally.

WHEN AFTER MANY false starts Harrison finally meets a few distant cousins, she feels guilty and confused. They keep asking why she left, although it was her parents who left, and when she will return. (Members of Harrison's own generation do indeed come and go, however; this is still a distinguishing trait of Italian-Americans.) She makes promises to visit again soon, promises she knows she will betray. "We are missing links," she writes, "we have broken the chain of human communion. We have inherited the sins of our fathers; our punishment is exile." The most emotional meeting is with an old woman who seems to have been awaiting her arrival in order to be able to die in peace. Harrison doubts that they are actually related. Even finding a hut that was once her grandmother's house fails to offer the mystical union she seeks. In the end she

realizes that the search itself is misguided:

Nothing can make my father more real to me than he already is. . . . What I want to know is: Whom did he love? Did he love me? Was he ever happy (is he happy now?)? The answers to these questions are more likely to come to me in dreams.

The book's true climax has come earlier, during Harrison's residence in Rome, where "my body is completely happy." Here she loves nearly everything and everyone she sees. She rehearses the way back to her apartment, delighting in the very names of the streets and piazzas she passes—"is Rome not too good to be true?" Her writing on churches and monuments is especially fine, if suffused with the

"rapture" she feels at being there to observe them, a word to which she keeps returning even while apologizing for its bluntness.

And in Rome she is, at last, comfortable with herself and her faith. Her restlessness and irritability abate. One day she finds herself no longer "shopping" for people, places, and objects but simply going to church. She stops worrying about "a 'place' in the Church," deciding that it is "as many-faceted . . . and as unified as life itself." Although she will travel further, in Rome she has found what she came for. "Italy offers one the most priceless of all one's possessions—one's own soul." Anyone who has felt most alive in another country, especially transforming Italy, will recognize this as true. □

Brief Reviews



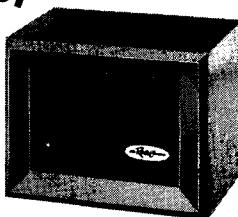
HAREM by Alev Lytle Croutier. Abbeville, \$35.00. The author is of Turkish origin and during her childhood heard many stories of life behind the no-longer-legal veil from senior female relatives. When she later became curious about actual harem conditions, she found reliable evidence limited. Harem inmates, it appears, wrote rarely if at all before this century. Ms. Croutier has been obliged to rely for the most part on reports from women like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who described what she had seen, or from male travelers who necessarily wrote from hearsay and often from lubricious fancy. Despite the paucity of documentation about the past, Ms. Croutier has produced an interesting book. She covers Turkish history, recollections by her family members, her own juvenile encounter with a professional matchmaker, correct Muslim etiquette, and the importance of coffee-making. She proceeds to intelligent speculation on the social and psychological influences that led the Turks to adopt the harem system (she denies that they invented it) and the use made by European artists of what amounts to a harem myth.

The text is generously illustrated—Ms. Croutier has studied art history, among other subjects—but almost all the paintings reproduced are by European men, who found the harem a fine excuse for combining brilliant colors, luxurious fabrics, and female nudity. The book is, all in all, a medley of information about the lives of Turkish women, from those in the Sultan's palace to those in rural villages, all of it held together by the author's feminist principles, which are firmly, though not rancorously, stated.

ON THE NARROW ROAD by Lesley Downer. Summit, \$19.95. In the spring of 1689 the poet Basho, Japan's great haiku master, set out on a five-month walking tour along what he called the Narrow Road to the Deep North. He visited friends and shrines, held poetry readings and sessions of instruction for local admirers, and eventually published an account of the journey. Ms. Downer, who is a part-time resident of Japan and a Basho devotee, undertook to follow the poet's route, searching for remains of the Japan of three centuries ago, and despite

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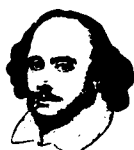
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modern roads and roaring traffic found that some of what Basho reported is still there. She describes beautiful valleys, unmodernized and underpopulated; ankle-wrenching climbs; spontaneous hospitality; the vagaries of backwoods inns; and meetings with fellow enthusiasts happy to spend hours reading Basho and composing haiku of their own. Among the merits of this agreeable travel book is the presentation of haiku in phonetic Japanese, which gives at least a hint of the sound patterns that are inevitably lost in translation.

SWANN by Carol Shields. Viking, \$17.95.

The Swann of the title is a Canadian farm woman whose vaguely Dickinsonian poetry is enjoying a belated boom, and Ms. Shields's mordant novel describes the literary ghouls who propose to batten on the late Mary Swann. The tale culminates in a symposium at Toronto, where the author provides a splendid deadpan parody of academic jargon and critical flapdoodle. Well-drawn characters, expert writing, and silky malice are combined in an exceptionally satisfying work of fiction.

HORTENSE IS ABDUCTED by Jacques Roubaud. Dalkey Archive Press, \$19.95.

Mr. Roubaud begins with "The weather was warm and beautiful, so we couldn't have been in Belgium." One never does find out where we are in this impishly fantastic novel. Its only firm locale is inside the head of the author, who meanwhile argues that since an author, however cleverly camouflaged, is always present in his work, he himself has the right to be both a character in the story and an observer outside it, even if this requires him to be in two places at the same time. Similar Gilbertian reasoning controls the whole comedy, which constantly defies all conventions of probability, possibility, and narrative structure. The book does obey one rule—it has a beginning and an end. Mr. Roubaud has not figured out how to break that one, but undoubtedly would be glad to if he could.

IMAGINING THE PAST by T. H. Breen.

Addison-Wesley, \$19.95. Mr. Breen's professional field is American history, and he admits to mild bewilderment at his employment as "resident human-

ist" by the historical society of East Hampton, Long Island. What on earth is a "resident humanist" expected to do in a town where early residents and literary summer people have lavished research and print on the records for years? He was, it turned out, expected to elucidate the history of a seventeenth-century house, and research convinced him that the people of East Hampton view the town's past through a romantic mist, believing it to have been a golden age of kindness, piety, industry, self-sufficiency, and isolation. What he found in, or deduced from, the archives was litigation, witchcraft charges, mercantile enterprise, and a lively commerce with the outside world. His is an unusual analysis of the selective habits of collective memory. It will probably make little impression on the thinking of East Hamptonites.

CHERTON by David Telfair. St. Martin's, \$14.95.

Mr. Telfair's Cherton is a minuscule English village dominated by the Woodley family of Mauley Hall, whose history the author summarizes with brisk irreverence before proceeding to his amusing trifle of a novel. The current owner of Mauley Hall, an amiable nitwit, skids on a piece of soap and thereby precipitates an upheaval of the entire social structure. The book has no purpose beyond entertainment, which it provides quite neatly, although readers subject to *déjà vu* may find themselves mildly haunted by Lucia, Draynefleete, and Cold Comfort Farm.

THE HILL TOWNS OF ITALY by Carol Field, with photographs by Richard Kauffman.

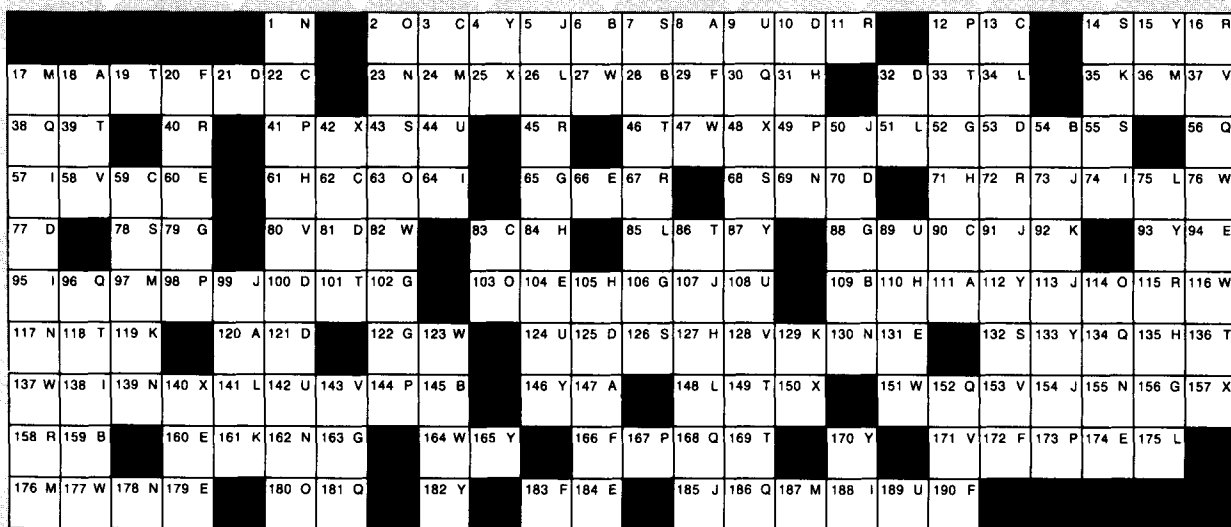
Dutton, \$19.95. The towns described in this large and handsome guidebook are scattered through splendid country from San Gimignano, south of Florence, to Orvieto, in southern Umbria. Mr. Kauffman has deliberately avoided modern elements in his fine pictures of architecture and scenery. There are no machines or signs or electric wires to impede the viewer's pleasure in artful stonework and elegant vistas. Ms. Field's text is equally confined to the beauties of the area, although she does provide a condensed history that ranges from Etruscan to modern times.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

ACROSTIC No. 49

BY DOROTHY OSBORNE

The letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, will spell out a quotation.
The first letters of clue answers spell the author and source of the quotation.



The solution to Acrostic No. 48 appears on page 76.

A. Calculus

111 120 18 8 147

B. 1984 World Series champions

145 6 159 54 109 28

C. Actor and author of *Romanoff and Juliet*

62 59 90 3 22 83 13

D. "If called by a panther, —": Nash (2 wds.)

70 121 53 10 21 81 100 32 77 125

E. Magazine aimed at adolescents

131 94 184 104 174 60 160 179 66

F. Monotonous rhythm (hyph.)

29 172 20 183 190 166

G. Second banana of late-night TV (2 wds.)

163 102 106 88 122 65 156 52 79

H. Flushed (hyph.)

105 110 31 84 135 71 127 61

I. Goblin of German folklore

64 57 74 138 95 188

J. Childishly simple (3 wds.)

154 107 50 91 99 185 113 73 5

K. Vaquero's equipment

161 35 92 119 129

L. Cheeseparer; pinchpenny

141 51 26 148 85 34 75 175

M. Brouhaha

17 187 36 176 24 97

N. Uncle Sam, in the City of Lights (hyph.)

69 178 1 155 162 130 117 139 23

O. Fashionable name in leather goods

103 114 63 2 180

P. Reiterate an unpleasantness (3 wds.)

98 173 41 49 12 167 144

Q. 1983 film directed by Diane Kurys (2 wds.)

30 181 186 56 96 168 152 38 134

R. Modern-day environmental woe (2 wds.)

40 16 11 67 115 72 45 158

S. V. S. Naipaul's birthplace

43 68 126 7 78 132 14 55

T. Informant to Woodward and Bernstein (2 wds.)

169 46 101 136 118 86 19 33 149 39

U. John Lennon song

189 142 9 124 89 108 44

V. Skedaddle

128 58 153 80 37 171 143

W. "Like heck!" (4 wds.)

164 47 116 137 177 76 151 82 123 27

X. Pat McCormick's specialty

150 157 48 42 140 25

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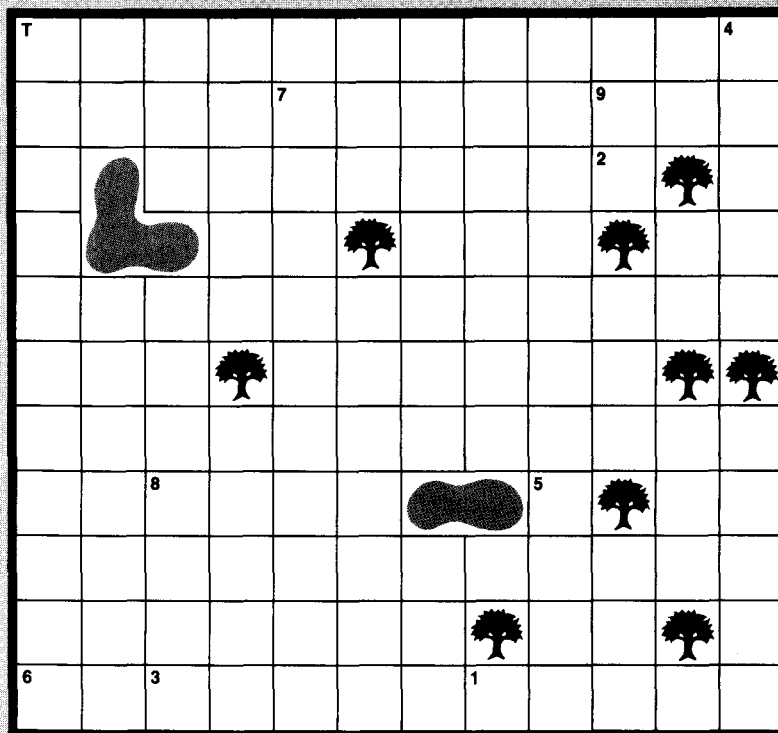
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BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

The diagram represents a nine-hole golf course, and each answer represents a shot that travels in a straight line up, down, sideways, or diagonally, one letter per square. By starting at the tee in the upper left corner, solvers can reach the first hole (marked 1) in four such shots. Each new shot begins in the square where the last one ended. The first hole (1) is thus the tee-off square for the sequence of shots approaching 2, and so on. The nine numbered squares should not be touched by any shots other than those ending holes and teeing off toward new ones. Avoid shooting into trees or water. And remember that each sequence of clues is numbered for the hole *toward* which it is proceeding. Answers include one proper noun and a variant spelling involved in 4b.



CLUES

- 1.a.** Tee off behind bar (7)
 - b.** Sand traps catching the sun (6)
 - c.** Marginal shot on green's grass (5)
 - d.** Walk to cup for total (5)
- 2.a.** Seat her on ten swings (8)
 - b.** Skirted but topless, moved slowly (5)
 - c.** Band leg after doctor's visit (6) (*two words*)
 - d.** Nothing's inhibiting American studs (5)
- 3.a.** Covering the lady with a skimpy piece of gingham (9)
 - b.** Turn part of a wheel around before painting vehicle (6) (*hyphenated*)
 - c.** Puts a tee back with samples (6)
 - d.** Small island country's marine gear (5)

- 4.a.** Gentian cultivated for medicinal element (7)
- b.** Sort of play with small snack (4)
- c.** Wives in church are married (5)
- 5.a.** Absolute amount repulsed rodents (8)
- b.** Men only name bug that's not moving (8)
- c.** Drink left for a pond resident (4)
- d.** Extended record includes Beethoven's Ninth (4)
- 6.a.** Family pictures may get these frames (8)
- b.** Rest in seat is disturbed (6)
- c.** Somebody fit permit inside of articles (7)
- d.** Revise copy describing Caesar's chief law (5)

- 7.a.** They ring for poisons taken orally (7)
 - b.** Pay it back in waste (7)
 - c.** Mysterious errors breaking up double play (4)
 - d.** Calls a name in an airport, and leaves (5)
- 8.a.** Scoff about last character that is more like a dwarf? (8)
 - b.** Passion overturned New Testament ruling (7)
 - c.** Private eye, bum, etc. (3)
 - d.** Cut-rate (4)
- 9.a.** Peg's ingesting routine muscle-builders (8)
 - b.** Man's address is back by river (3)
 - c.** Letter carried by carhop (3)
 - d.** State greeting, clasped in hugs? (4)
 - e.** Has snow fallen? (4)

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BY ANNE H. SOUKHANOV

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